



BACKGROUNDER : Changes to Self-Isolation Requirements

The Chief Public Health Officer (CPHO) is announcing the relaxing of self-isolation requirements for NWT residents, non-resident essential workers and travellers with an exemption.

[As outlined in Emerging Wisely 2021: Step by Step Together](#), the changes to the requirements for self-isolation would be made when the threshold of 66-75% partial vaccination has been reached nationally and the seven day average COVID case count in Canada is under 1,000 new cases per day. These thresholds have now been reached and the CPHO is taking steps to relax self-isolation requirements.

The relaxed restrictions will mean:

- No isolation for fully vaccinated travellers and household members (regardless of vaccination status) who did not travel. Fully vaccinated travellers will be able to self-isolate in small communities, with Day 1 and Day 14 negative tests.
- 8-day isolation for partially vaccinated travellers and household members (regardless of vaccination status) who did not travel, with a negative day 8 COVID-19 test. Household members do not require a test unless symptomatic.
- 10-day isolation for unvaccinated travellers, including children under 12, and household members (regardless of vaccination status) who did not travel, with a negative day 10 COVID-19 test. Household members do not require a test unless symptomatic.
- Additionally, essential service workers dealing with vulnerable populations or who work in congregate settings or small communities will need a negative day 1 COVID-19 test prior to work and a day 14 test while self-monitoring, through an exemption process.

The CPHO is also rescinding the recommendation that NWT residents avoid non-essential travel. Leisure travel within the NWT for non-NWT residents is still restricted. That restriction is expected to be relaxed in late summer-early fall as outlined in Emerging Wisely 2021.



	First dose of a two-dose vaccine	Proceeding 2-week time period	Final dose of any vaccine	Proceeding 2-week time period	
Unvaccinated			Partially Vaccinated		Fully vaccinated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully vaccinated: after the 2-week period following your final dose of vaccine • Partially vaccinated: after the 2-week period following your first dose and up to two weeks after your final dose • Unvaccinated: have not received a dose of vaccine or are less than 2 weeks after receiving first dose 					

Additional Testing Requirements

Fully vaccinated travellers entering small NWT communities will require a day 1 test and a day 14 test.

Travellers who are partially or unvaccinated will require a day 14 test if they are travelling to a small community after completing their self-isolation and exit testing requirements in a larger centre.

Small communities are any NWT community that does not include the hub communities of Yellowknife, Hay River, Inuvik, and Fort Smith, as well as Fort Simpson and Norman Wells.

- This requirement is in place because small communities do not have the same health care capacity as other communities. Lower vaccination rates in some communities mean the COVID-19 risk is higher.
- This requirement applies to all travellers regardless of residency status.

Fully vaccinated essential workers supporting vulnerable or high-risk populations will require a day 1 test and a day 14 test.

Partially vaccinated and unvaccinated essential workers supporting vulnerable or high-risk populations will require a day 1 test and a day 14 test in addition to their day 8 or day 10 negative test.

- This includes workers who have been outside the NWT in the last 14 days who work in healthcare, correctional, school settings, those working with unvaccinated populations or high-risk settings such as shelters for example.



Vaccination Status	Self-isolation Requirements	Testing Requirements* (most travelers)	Household members	Day 1 and Day 14 Testing Required
Fully Vaccinated	None	None	None	Travelling to a small NWT community
				Working with vulnerable populations and/or in enclosed settings
Partially Vaccinated	8 Days	Day 8 negative test	8-day self-isolation, no test required unless symptomatic	Travelling to a small NWT community
				Working with vulnerable populations and/or in enclosed settings
Unvaccinated	10 Days	Day 10 negative test	10-day self-isolation, no test required unless symptomatic	Travelling to a small NWT community
				Working with vulnerable populations and/or in enclosed settings
Mixed travellers in same household	Meet requirements for least vaccinated traveller	Test only the least vaccinated traveller	Meet requirements for least vaccinated traveller	Travelling to a small NWT community
				Working with vulnerable populations and/or in enclosed settings

- Fully vaccinated: after the 2-week period following your final dose of vaccine
- Partially vaccinated: after the 2-week period following your first dose and up to two weeks after your final dose
- Unvaccinated: have not received a dose of vaccine or are less than 2 weeks after receiving first dose

*Children under the age of 2 will not be required to take a test; however, household must still isolate for the required isolation time.



* Those who are partially or unvaccinated and are seeking permission to work during their isolation period may have additional testing requirements.

Please note that it may be difficult to access testing in some small communities. It is recommended that those travelling into small communities get the day 1 entry test and/or day 14 exit test in a larger centre if possible.

For more information: [Booking Testing](#)

Self-isolation Plan and Proof of Vaccination

Everyone entering the territory is still required to submit a Self-Isolation Plan (SIP) so that the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer (OCPHO) is aware of travel and travel locations of those who return to, or enter, the NWT. This is especially important for contact-tracing purposes, if necessary.

For more information: [Self-Isolation Plan](#)

NWT residents who have received their vaccine in the NWT do not require proof of vaccination. However, when filing your SIP you will need to legally declare your vaccination status. Non-residents or those who received their vaccine outside the NWT will be required to provide proof of vaccination upon request. It is recommended that these travellers have proof of vaccination from the jurisdiction in which it was received before travelling. This process will be outlined in the exemption process.

Please Note: it is anticipated ProtectNWT staff will be very busy reviewing self-isolation plans in the coming days. It may take additional time to process these initial requests as we implement this change, and we appreciate for patience. We ask that residents wait a few days to apply if they are not travelling before the Canada Day weekend.

Impacts

COVID-19 is a persistent virus and it will find a way to enter the territory. One of the most common ways for it to arrive in a new population is through importation from other jurisdictions. What happens beyond our borders both domestically and globally is out of the NWT's control.

We should all prepare ourselves to live with COVID-19 for the long-term. When public health orders relax, the NWT government will continue to support communities and



residents to promote healthy lifestyles related to COVID-19. This pandemic taught us a lot about personal health measures, such as staying home when we are sick, washing our hands, wearing a mask, cleaning, healthy respiratory habits and how to care for one another. We should not lose sight of those lessons as we reduce restrictions.

For more information: [Healthy Habits](#)

Families with young children

Children under 12 years of age are not yet eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. This means that these children rely on all residents who are partially vaccinated or unvaccinated to self-isolate right now to help keep them safe. The isolation period for families with children under 12 has been shortened to 10 days with a negative test. It is anticipated that the Pfizer vaccine will be approved for children under 12 in the fall of 2021.

Parents who will be travelling with unvaccinated or partially vaccinated children should follow healthy respiratory practices and be aware of the COVID situation during transit and their final destination. Testing of children under 2 will not be required upon return once they have completed their 10 days of self-isolation and have not been symptomatic or named as a close contact of COVID 19.

Public health is about protecting all NWT residents. The original COVID-19 virus was thought not to affect children as much as it did adults. However, new variants of concern, which now make up the majority of COVID-19 cases, can cause more serious illness in children and be more contagious. In fact, we have seen this first-hand in the NWT during the recent N.J. Macpherson School outbreak in Yellowknife. Children who are unvaccinated can pass infections to others, including their friends or family members who could be at high risk for severe outcomes from COVID-19. This measure intends to prevent outbreaks and protect children and adults who are at risk of severe illness (for example other children with chronic illness which puts them at risk for severe COVID-19 outcomes).

Protecting your community

Now that self-isolation requirements have been eased, the recommendation to avoid non-essential travel outside the territory has also been lifted. This means that if people follow public health guidance while travelling, they should make the choice to travel when they feel safe to do so. This is part of the NWT's plan to emerge from this pandemic. NWT residents will be free to take vacations and travel as they please and should not be faced with harsh judgement from family, friends, or community members.



It is important to know and trust that anyone who enters the NWT right now is still required to file a self-isolation plan. This will allow the OCPHO to better manage an outbreak if it were to occur.

Vaccination rates in communities are now available on the [GNWT COVID-19 dashboard](#). This allows communities to determine their own risk and take any necessary precautions. When there are gatherings in communities, residents or organizers should feel empowered to require masking, physical distancing or other safety measures that they determine are needed. And remember that the best defence against COVID-19 is vaccination.

For more information about how to protect yourself, make informed decisions based on risk level and public health measures: [Guidance for Residents](#)

Vaccination Choice

COVID-19 vaccines are the best way the NWT can protect itself from COVID-19. Anchoring our relaxation to vaccination rates is the only way that we can emerge from this pandemic safely. Everyone in the NWT is safer if **enough** people are vaccinated, not if everyone is vaccinated. Doing our best to prevent outbreaks and to protect those that cannot receive the COVID-19 vaccine relies on the majority of people doing what they can to protect one another. That is why everyone who can be vaccinated should be vaccinated. The targets that have been set in Emerging Wisely 2021 are attainable.

NWT's Public Health Act means that the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer has a responsibility to protect those who live and work in NWT. At this point in the pandemic, those who are returning from travel who are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated still have a higher risk of having COVID-19 and there are still regions of the NWT where many people are unvaccinated. If people are unable to be vaccinated (such as children) or choose not to be vaccinated, these health measures are in place specifically for their protection.

It is important to remember that public health decisions are designed to protect everyone, including the most vulnerable among us, which in this case includes our unvaccinated population. And in order to protect the most vulnerable, and the NWT health care system, these self-isolation requirements need to remain in effect until all public health restrictions are lifted.

For more information: [Vaccines](#)