COVID-19 Travel & Border Measures

Updated December 2021

Background

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Government of Canada has been monitoring the best way to manage international travel to and from Canada with the goal of slowing the spread of COVID-19. Safety regulations have included closing the border to non-essential travel, redirecting all international passenger flights through specific authorized airports, gradually increasing the presence of COVID-19 clinical and screening officers, quarantine officers, and environmental health officers at key ports of entry, as well as implementing quarantine periods for some travellers entering the country. Over the course of the year, the Government of Canada has continued to amend border and travel requirements in accordance with current public health regulations and protocols. In December 2021, the federal government declared an advisory statement against non-essential international travel for all Canadians. As well, additional safety measures were implemented in BC to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

In November 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced a new variant of concern (VOC) called Omicron.[i] Real-world evidence shows that Omicron appears to be highly transmissible, potentially more so than the Delta variant, according to WHO director general, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.[ii] While further research is required to fully understand the behaviour of this particular variant, the Government of Canada has instituted additional travel measures to reduce the risk of transmission of all COVID-19 variants, including both Delta and Omicron. In a press conference on December 15, 2021, the federal government announced new travel measures, strongly advising against travel outside of Canada for the next four weeks.[iii] This new advisory is intended to be preventative as COVID-19 infections caused by the Omicron variant increase significantly around the world.[iv]

At the end of November, the government instituted measures that prohibited entry from certain countries with higher case rates associated with Omicron, as well as enhanced requirements for Canadian citizens, permanent residents, and individuals with status under the *Indian Act* arriving from these locations.[v] Those who have travelled from any of the listed countries within the previous 14 days will be required to obtain a negative COVID-19 molecular test from a third country prior to entering Canada, and will also be required to complete day-1 arrival testing upon entry, as well as day-8 testing and a 14-day quarantine period. These measures are currently set to expire on January 31, 2022. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) will continue to monitor case prevalence of Omicron both internationally and domestically and will update travel measures accordingly.

As well, travellers entering Canada from any country (not including the United States), may be subject to random day-1 COVID-19 testing upon arrival.[vi] All travellers must be fully vaccinated and have entered their vaccine and travel information into the ArriveCAN app prior to landing in Canada. Information required to complete the ArriveCAN process and receive quarantine exemption include a pre-entry molecular test, proof of at least two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine approved for use in Canada (or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine),[vii] and incoming flight and travel details. Those who do not meet the vaccination requirement must also present a suitable quarantine plan with address.

The federal government announced in late November that fully vaccinated Canadian residents who visited the United States for a period of 72 hours or less would no longer be required to provide a pre-entry COVID-19 molecular test result from outside of Canada.[viii] However, with the rapid transmission of the Omicron variant, this was repealed in December, and Canadians must once again present a COVID-19 molecular test taken within the United States prior to return to Canada, even for trips of less than 72 hours.[ix]

The Canada-US land border was closed from March 2020 and reopened to Canadians for non-essential travel on November 8, 2021. Those entering the US by land are required to be fully vaccinated and must provide proof of their vaccination status in order to cross the border. While the United States announced new air travel restrictions for all foreign travellers including Canadian travellers effective December 6, 2021, there are

currently no changes in place for land border travel.[x] Canadians entering the US by air, however, will be required to provide a negative pre-entry COVID-19 test within 24 hours of arrival.

Earlier in 2021, a [Leger poll](#) found that out of approximately 1600 Canadian respondents, 41% felt somewhat anxious, and 11% felt very anxious about loosening safety measures and returning to pre-pandemic conditions too quickly.[xi] Prime Minister Trudeau has stated that the federal government will continue to take a measured approach to allowing travellers into Canada.

Nurses know that the mental health impacts of being separated from loved ones by borders during COVID-19 has been very difficult for many. After more than a year of COVID-19 public health measures and uncertainty, many people are anxious to travel again and want to see loved ones. It is imperative that we continue to follow public health measures and guidelines to ensure that safe travel can occur. Nursing also recognizes that many may feel uncomfortable as restart plans take place and as travellers enter the country. Nurses play an important role in helping people transition from pandemic public health measures to communicable disease protocols and can provide necessary context and leadership in helping people understand the measures in place to ensure safe travel.

Key Messages

- The Government of Canada continues to monitor the best ways to manage international travel to help slow the spread of COVID-19 between countries.

- In an attempt to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 including all variants such as Delta and Omicron, the Government of Canada has instituted temporary enhanced restrictions for travellers entering Canada from a list of countries with higher COVID-19 case rates associated with Omicron.

- On December 15, 2021, the federal government updated travel guidance, advising Canadians not to travel outside of the country for non-essential purposes for the next four weeks as a preventative measure to slow the spread of Omicron.

- The Canada-US land border reopened to non-essential travel on November 8, 2021 and Canadians entering the US by land must provide proof of vaccination.

- Nurses play an important role in helping people transition from pandemic public health measures to communicable disease protocols and can provide necessary context and leadership in helping people understand the measures in place to ensure safe travel.

Further Reading/Resources

- [CBSA: COVID-19: Current border measures and requirements](#)

- [Government of Canada: COVID-19 Travel Advice & Advisories](#)

- [Government of Canada: How to Use ArriveCAN](#)

- [COVID-19 Vaccines Accepted for Travel by Government of Canada](#)

- [Travel to Canada: Provincial and Territorial Restrictions](#)

- [Adjustment to Canada's Border & Travel Measures – November 2021](#)

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[i] PHAC. Government of Canada introduces additional measures to address COVID-19 Omicron variant of concern. November 30, 2021. https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2021/11/government-of-canada-introduces-additional-measures-to-address-covid-19-omicron-variant-of-concern.html

[ii] Young, Leslie. *Global News*. Omicron is raging in the U.K. What can Canada learn? December 15, 2021. https://globalnews.ca/news/8450674/omicron-uk-covid-indicators-canada/?utm_source=site_banner_persistant

[iii] Tasker, John Paul. *CBC News*. 'Now is not the time': Federal government warns against travel abroad as Omicron spreads. December 15, 2021. https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-travel-restrictions-omicron-1.6286656

[iv] Tasker, John Paul, *CBC News*. *'Now is not the time': Federal government warns as Omicron spreads.*

[v] PHAC. Government of Canada introduces new measures to address COVID-19 Omicron variant of concern. November 26, 2021. https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2021/11/government-of-canada-introduces-new-measures-to-address-covid-19-omicron-variant-of-concern.html

[vi] Government of Canada. COVID-19 vaccinated travellers entering Canada. December 13, 2021. https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid/travel-restrictions/covid-vaccinated-travellers-entering-canada

[vii] Health Canada. Approved COVID-19 Vaccines. September 24, 2021. https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines.html

[viii] PHAC. Adjustments to Canada's border and travel measures. November 19, 2021. https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2021/11/adjustments-to-canadas-border-and-travel-measures.html

[ix] D'Andrea, Aaron. *Global News*. Canada reintroducing PCR test for any length of travel abroad amid Omicron. December 17, 2021. https://globalnews.ca/news/8458969/canada-reintroducing-pcr-test-omicron-travel/

[x] Lao, David. Travel restrictions and Omicron: What's changing in Canada, U.S. Global News. December 2, 2021. https://globalnews.ca/news/8416482/omicron-travel-rules-us-canada-world/

[xi] Leger 360. Lifting Safety Measures and the Return to Normal. May 26, 2021. https://leger360.com/surveys/legers-north-american-tracker-may-26-2021/