



COVID-19: Proof of Vaccine

Updated August 2021

Background

On August 23, 2021, BC Premier John Horgan, BC Minister of Health Adrian Dix, and Provincial Health Officer Dr Bonnie Henry announced that a new proof of COVID-19 vaccination 'BC Vaccine Card' program will come into effect starting September 13, 2021.ⁱ Initial details about the program were announced during a news conference and further information about the program and how British Columbians can register will be released on or before September 7, 2021. The [BC Vaccine Card](#) will be required for all British Columbians and visitors who are aged 12 and over who wish to participate in any 'discretionary activities' including visiting concerts, movies or sporting events, participating in indoor fitness activities, dining at restaurants indoor or on the patio, visiting casinos, night clubs, conferences, workshops, weddings, or other indoor ticketed or organized events.ⁱⁱ During the news conference, Premier Horgan, Minister Dix and Dr Henry stated that British Columbians will have until September 13 to receive at least their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and will be expected to receive the second dose as of October 24, 2021.

This announcement comes as some other provinces and territories in Canada have either recently rolled out or are in the process of implementing similar proof of vaccination programs. In June 2021 [Manitoba began to issue proof of vaccination cards](#), [Prince Edward Island issues the 'PEI Pass'](#) used for people travelling to the province and people from PEI who are returning from another province, [Saskatchewan introduced a temporary printable proof of vaccination card](#) and noted they will be working on a more official passport, and [Quebec announced it will move forward with a vaccine passport](#) which will come into effect September 1, 2021. There is still some debate in some provinces regarding implementing proof of vaccine requirements (Alberta and Ontario), and other provinces and territories (Newfoundland/Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Yukon and Nunavut) have indicated they are monitoring the situation but have not yet moved in this direction on a provincial level.ⁱⁱⁱ

When surveyed about vaccine passports, Angus Reid data shows that the majority of Canadians would be willing to carry a vaccine passport for travel to the United States (76%) as well as to other international destinations (79%).^{iv} However, when discussing the potential for vaccine passport use in the local community, to gain access to restaurants, movie theatres and other establishments, a larger number of Canadians oppose the concept (41%), meaning that vaccine passports could meet resistance when implemented in certain cases.^v A Leger 360 survey from May 2021 demonstrates that the majority of Canadian respondents are in favour of vaccine passports (61% of approximately 1500 respondents), and approximately three-fifths of those respondents feel that private businesses should be able to limit access to their services based on vaccine passport status.^{vi} Furthermore, many provincial and territorial restart plans provide greater liberties and access to services for those who are fully vaccinated.^{vii}

Federally, on August 11, 2021, the Government of Canada announced the use of vaccine passports for international travel to be implemented by the fall of 2021.^{viii} Immigration Minister Marco Mendicino discussed preliminary details during a news conference, stating that the vaccine passports are not intended for domestic use, but the provinces and territories could use them as such if they choose to do so.^{ix}

The concept of vaccine passports is not new. Since July 2021, Canadian travellers have been using the ArriveCAN app, which was implemented initially to permit travellers who are fully vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine approved for use in Canada, asymptomatic, and eligible to enter Canada exemption from quarantine.^x The ArriveCAN application is available to use both online and via mobile download, and includes contact tracing information based on where the traveller has visited, the purpose of travel as well as dates, locations and ports of entry, COVID-19 pre-entry testing information, whether the traveller has secured quarantine accommodation and the location, among other details.^{xi}

In order to use the ArriveCAN app, travellers are required to upload an image of their COVID-19 vaccination card as proof in order to use the service.^{xii} Canadian land and air borders reopened to American travellers on August 9, 2021 and will open to international travellers starting on September 7, 2021. Any international



travellers must have been fully vaccinated for at least 14 days prior to entry with the recommended number of doses of any COVID-19 vaccine approved for use in Canada. The vaccines currently authorized for use in Canada remain those manufactured by PfizerBioNTech, Moderna, Oxford-AstraZeneca, and Johnson & Johnson. When Canada-wide vaccine passports are implemented in the fall of 2021, the ArriveCAN app will be expanded to contain immunization records of Canadians and permanent residents who are fully vaccinated. It bears noting that details for those individuals with mixed doses (i.e., one dose of Oxford-AstraZeneca and another with an mRNA vaccine) are still being determined.

The Federal, Provincial and Territorial Privacy Commissioners of Canada have reported on potential privacy encroachments through the implementation of a vaccine passport via a joint statement and outlined some parameters. The vaccine passports must be 'necessity-based,' meaning that their necessity must be evidential in achieving a public health outcome.^{xiii} As with other COVID-19 restrictions, the management and implementation aspects could raise difficult challenges. Additionally, a population-based investment in vaccine passports must be demonstrably effective through ongoing use, and the privacy risks associated with their use must be proportionate to the public health outcomes they are used to address.^{xiv} During the August 23, 2021 news conference, BC Premier John Horgan noted that the Government of BC is working closely with the Provincial Privacy Commissioner to ensure that these parameters are met.

Nurses understand that the issue of vaccine passports is multi-layered and complex. From a nursing perspective, we know the COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Canada are not only safe but highly effective. As we grapple with the highly transmissible Delta variant worldwide, and as we continue to ensure that we address vaccine hesitancy amongst the populations we serve, nurses know that the question of the equity of vaccine passports will arise. Nursing, as always, is well positioned to help people understand why immunization status matters in the context of a global pandemic and, given the broad and holistic approach that nursing takes when interacting with patients and clients, nurses are well positioned to help people understand the nuances of balancing a vaccine passport with the management of key privacy and equity concerns. Immunization records are not new and in fact have been kept as 'proof' of immunization against other illnesses (smallpox, cholera, yellow fever, polio etc.). There is a recognition amongst many that vaccine passports do in fact allow for greater mobility and reopening of society. However, there is also a concern that those with legitimate reasons for not being vaccinated, such as those with certain medical exemptions, those who have yet to be eligible for vaccine based on age, or those with religious reasons, may be treated poorly as a result of their vaccination status, and would not be afforded the same rights of mobility as vaccinated individuals. What is clear is that vaccine passports must always be considered in such a way that is equitable, just and takes into consideration complex privacy concerns.

Key Messages

- On August 23, 2021, Premier John Horgan along with Health Minister Adrian Dix and Provincial Health Officer Dr Bonnie Henry announced that the 'BC Vaccine Card' will come into effect on September 13, 2021 and will be a requirement to participate in any discretionary activities.
- British Columbians and visitors within British Columbia will require the BC Vaccine Card to demonstrate proof of vaccine to gain access to restaurants (indoor and on the patio), casinos, night clubs, concerts, music performances, sporting events, fitness facilities, conferences and workshops, weddings, and other ticketed and/or organized events.
- Angus Reid survey data shows that the majority of Canadians would be willing to carry a COVID-19 vaccine passport to travel internationally.
- On August 11, 2021 the federal government announced a vaccine passport would come into effect in the early fall to be used for international travel.
- Nursing, as always, is well positioned to help people understand why immunization status matters in the context of a global pandemic and given the broad and holistic approach that nursing takes when interacting with patients and clients, nurses are well positioned to help people understand the nuances of a vaccine passport while also ensuring that key privacy concerns are managed.



- NNPBC believes that vaccine passports must be assessed on a regular basis and that their use must be equitable, just and mindful of privacy concerns.

Further Reading/Resources

- [Province of BC: Proof of Vaccination](#)
- [Coming Soon: B.C.'s Vaccine Card](#)
- [Health Canada: Use ArriveCAN to Enter Canada – Exemption for Eligible, Fully Vaccinated Travellers](#)
- [Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada: Privacy and COVID-19 Vaccine Passports](#)
- [Angus Reid: Vaccine Passports – Canadians show strong support for use in international travel, fewer willing to comply at home](#)

ⁱ BC Gov News. B.C. launches proof of vaccination to stop spread of COVID-19. August 23, 2021.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0053-001659>

ⁱⁱ BC Gov News. *B.C. launches proof of vaccination to stop spread of COVID-19*. August 2021.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cousins, Ben. CTV News. What provinces have to say about vaccine passports. August 5, 2021.

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/what-provinces-have-to-say-about-vaccine-passports-1.5536558>

^{iv} Angus Reid. Vaccine Passports: Canadians show strong support for use in international travel, fewer willing to comply at home. May 26, 2021. <https://angusreid.org/covid-vaccine-passport/>

^v Angus Reid. Vaccine Passports: Canadians show strong support for use in international travel, fewer willing to comply at home. May 26, 2021. <https://angusreid.org/covid-vaccine-passport/>

^{vi} Leger 360. Leger's North American Tracker – May 11, 2021. <https://leger360.com/surveys/legers-north-american-tracker-may-11-2021/>

^{vii} Duong, D, D'Souza Butts, S, and Vogel, L. CMAJ. Is Canada warming up to "vaccine passports"? May 28, 2021.
<https://cmajnews.com/2021/05/28/covid-passports-1095945/>

^{viii} Rabson, Mia. The Globe and Mail. Ottawa to roll out COVID-19 vaccine passports for foreign travel. August 11, 2021.
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-ottawa-to-roll-out-covid-19-vaccine-passports-for-foreign-travel/>

^{ix} Rabson, Mia. *Ottawa to roll out COVID-19 vaccine passports*. 2021.

^x Health Canada. Use ArriveCAN to enter Canada. 2021. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/arrivecan.html>

^{xi} Health Canada. *Use ArriveCAN to enter Canada*. 2021.

^{xii} Jackson, H. Global News. Expert urges Canada to 'follow the science' on COVID-19 vaccine passports. June 21, 2021.
<https://globalnews.ca/news/7964482/vaccine-passport-problems/>

^{xiii} Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada. Privacy and COVID-19 Vaccine Passports: Joint Statement by Federal, Provincial and Territorial Privacy Commissioners. May 19, 2021. https://www.priv.gc.ca/en/opc-news/speeches/2021/sd_20210519/

^{xiv} Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada. Privacy and COVID-19 Vaccine Passports: Joint Statement by Federal, Provincial and Territorial Privacy Commissioners. May 19, 2021. https://www.priv.gc.ca/en/opc-news/speeches/2021/sd_20210519/