



GMS Flash Alert

Immigration Edition

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Canada - New Pre-Departure COVID-19 Testing Requirements for Travellers to Canada

To continue to prevent further introduction and transmission of COVID-19 and its new variants into Canada, the government of Canada has announced that **effective January 7, all air travellers must test negative for COVID-19 before flying to Canada from another country.**

The new requirement covers all air passengers five years of age or older, subject to certain exemptions.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Foreign nationals, Canadian citizens and permanent residents who are currently travelling and/or returning to Canada soon will have to immediately arrange for a COVID-19 test to avoid a delay in their travel to Canada. Foreign nationals currently in Canada, as well as Canadians who are planning to travel abroad should consider how they will meet these requirements before departure.

In addition, the Canadian government will further increase surveillance efforts to help ensure travellers entering Canada complete the mandatory 14-day quarantine period under the Quarantine Act.

Violating any instructions provided when travellers enter Canada is an offence under the Quarantine Act and could lead to up to six months in prison and/or \$750,000 in fines.

Pre-Boarding COVID-19 Testing Requirements

Under the new rule, travellers must receive a negative result on **a molecular polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test or a Loop-Mediated Isothermal Amplification (LAMP) test** – the standard nose swab tests for detecting active COVID-19 infections – within 72 hours of boarding a flight to Canada. Antigen screening or other types of test such as Diffractive Phase Interferometry will not be accepted.

Travellers should note the following:

- The COVID-19 test must be from a lab accredited by an external organization (e.g., government, professional association);
- Written or electronic documentation of a negative result from a COVID-19 test must be presented to the airline prior to coming to Canada – without a negative COVID-19 test, travellers will be denied boarding onto their flight; and
- Proof of having a vaccine will not replace the negative test result requirement as further evidence is required to determine if a vaccinated person can still spread the virus.

In an [Interim Order](#) issued on January 6, 2021, Transport Canada identifies countries for which there is no requirement to demonstrate or validate the PCR or LAMP test at boarding, due to the absence or near absence of testing in those locations. Individuals arriving to Canada from these countries without a negative PCR test will be subject to additional measures from federal Quarantine Officers. They will have a choice between taking a PCR test upon arrival or being directed to a federal quarantine facility at the port of arrival.

Evidence of a Negative COVID-19 Test

Unless exempt, travellers must present a valid negative test to an airline prior to boarding their flight to Canada. Specifically, travellers must present the following evidence of negative COVID-19 molecular test:

- The person's name and date of birth;
- The name and civic address of the laboratory that administered the test;
- The date the specimen was collected and the test method used; and
- The test results.

Airlines (including both private operators and air carriers that operate commercial air services) will be required to refuse boarding to travellers that are unable to provide such proof.

Exemptions from the COVID-19 Testing Requirements

Children under the age of five are exempt from the new requirements. Other exempted persons include:

- a crew member or a person who seeks to enter Canada only to become such a crew member;
- emergency service providers;
- technical stops – flights refueling.

Travellers from **Saint Pierre et Miquelon** are exempt from the requirement to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test **until January 14, 2021**.

Travellers from **Haiti** are also exempt **until January 21, 2021**, but are strongly encouraged to complete a COVID-19 test upon arriving to Canada.

Travellers departing from the [Caribbean or South America](#) can use tests conducted within 96 hours of departure until **January 14, 2021**.

Mandatory Quarantine Requirements Continue to Apply

Government officials will continue to review travellers' quarantine plans. If the plan is unsuitable, travellers will be asked to quarantine in a federal quarantine facility.

Travellers must also continue to use the [ArriveCAN app or website](#) to provide accurate contact information and their mandatory quarantine plan on or before entry.

For prior coverage, see GMS [Flash Alert 2020-472](#) (25 November 2020).

KPMG NOTE

Immediate Action Steps for Employers, Items of Note for Travellers/Employees

- Make sure employees seeking entry to Canada are aware of the obligation to obtain a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours of boarding their flight to Canada;
- Inform employees that if they have not completed a COVID-19 test or the results are not negative, they will likely have to reschedule their departure;
- Advise employees to contact their travel insurance provider to find out if they have COVID-19-related medical coverage – if not, they may be expected to cover any costs related to being tested and obtaining proof of their test results; and
- Employees can contact their airline company or their local consulate to seek guidance on where to obtain a COVID-19 test in their region.

The government of Canada strongly advises against non-essential travel outside Canada as there may be sudden restrictions and additional requirements during the pandemic that places travellers in difficult and stressful circumstances while abroad.

Employees and travellers who have concerns about their upcoming travels and next steps are encouraged to contact KPMG Law LLP for further guidance.

RESOURCES:

- 1 See: <https://www.canada.ca/en/transport-canada/news/2020/12/pre-departure-covid-19-testing-and-negative-results-for-air-travellers-coming-to-canada.html>
- 2 See: <https://www.canada.ca/en/transport-canada/news/2020/12/pre-departure-covid-19-testing-and-negative-results-to-be-required-for-all-air-travellers-coming-to-canada.html>
- 3 See: <https://tc.canada.ca/en/ministerial-orders-interim-orders-directives-directions-response-letters/interim-order-respecting-certain-requirements-civil-aviation-due-covid-19-no-18#schedule2>
- 4 See: <https://www.canada.ca/en/transport-canada/news/2021/01/new-pre-departure-covid-19-testing-requirements-come-into-effect-for-all-air-travellers-flying-into-canada.html>
- 5 See: <https://tc.canada.ca/en/ministerial-orders-interim-orders-directives-directions-response-letters/interim-order-respecting-certain-requirements-civil-aviation-due-covid-19-no-18>

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Contact us

For additional information or assistance, please contact your local GMS or People Services professional* or one of the following professionals with the KPMG International member firm in Canada]:



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