



# GMS Flash Alert

## Immigration Edition

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## Canada - Changes to Border Measures

The government of Canada has announced a series of updates to Canadian border measures.<sup>1</sup>

- Effective November 30, 2021, fully vaccinated Canadian citizens, permanent residents, and individuals registered under the Indian Act who exit and re-enter Canada within 72 hours of departure will not have to present a negative pre-entry COVID-19 molecular test result for re-entry.
- Canada will expand the list of COVID-19 vaccines that travellers can receive to be considered fully vaccinated for the purpose of entering Canada.
- Individuals who have a valid work permit or study permit approval will no longer be able to enter Canada without being fully vaccinated.

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### WHY THIS MATTERS

Previously, all travellers (ages 5 and up) have been required to provide proof of a negative COVID-19 molecular test result taken within 72 hours of their scheduled flight or arrival at a land boarder to enter Canada. Alternatively, travellers could also provide proof of a previous positive test result taken between 14 and 180 days prior to their scheduled departure. These tests can cost \$100 to 300 and can sometimes take over 24 hours to obtain results, which can place undue pressure on travellers. (All dollar figures expressed are Canadian dollars.)

With the latest changes, individuals with a right of entry to Canada will be able to take short trips including business travel without planning for a COVID-19 test prior to their arrival or return to Canada. This will help to promote recreational and optional travel for short durations such as crossing south of the border for shopping during the holiday season.

Additionally, the expanded list of accepted vaccines means foreign nationals that have received a full dosage of one of the newly added vaccines can now apply for a work permit at the port of entry, rather than through a visa post abroad.

These upcoming changes reflect the next stage in the Canadian government's approach as it aligns with improving vaccination rates both in Canada and around the world.

## Exemption from Pre-Entry COVID-19 Testing Requirements

The exemption from pre-entry COVID-19 testing requirements only applies to trips originating in Canada and taken by fully vaccinated Canadians citizens, permanent residents and individuals registered under the Indian Act. The exemption also applies to accompanying children under the age of 12 and individuals with medical contraindications to vaccination. These individuals must demonstrate that they left Canada for less than 72 hours.

The 72-hour period begins from the initially scheduled departure time of one's flight leaving Canada to the scheduled departure time for their return flight to Canada. Travellers will be responsible for providing proof of the 72-hour period to airline/rail companies and border officials as required (e.g., boarding pass, travel itinerary).

For trips that are longer than 72 hours, **all** travellers must continue to complete the mandatory pre-entry molecular COVID-19 test to enter Canada. Antigen tests are **not** accepted.

In addition, all travellers, regardless of how long they were away from Canada, must continue to submit their mandatory information via ArriveCAN, including proof of vaccination in English or French and a quarantine plan prior to arriving in Canada.

## Canada Accepting Additional COVID-19 Vaccines

Effective November 30, Canada will expand the list of COVID-19 vaccines that travellers can receive to qualify as fully vaccinated. Currently, Canada accepts the following vaccines:

- Pfizer-BioNTech (Comirnaty, tozinameran, BNT162b2)
- Moderna (Spikevax, mRNA-1273)
- AstraZeneca (Vaxzevria, COVISHIELD, ChAdOx1-S, AZD1222)
- Janssen/Johnson & Johnson (Ad26.COV2.S).

Starting November 30, Canada will also accept the following vaccines:

- Bharat Biotech (Covaxin, BBV152 A, B, C)
- Sinopharm (Beijing) BBIBP-CorV (Vero Cells)
- Sinovac (CoronaVac, PiCoVacc).

To qualify as a fully vaccinated traveller, individuals must have received one of the following at least 14 full days prior to their travel to Canada:

- At least two doses of an accepted vaccine; or
- A mix of 2 accepted vaccines; or
- At least 1 dose of the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Travellers can use a proof of vaccination issued by their province/territory, the local health facility where their vaccinations were administered, or from their country of vaccination, as long as it is a COVID-19 vaccine approved by the government of Canada for the purpose of travel.<sup>2</sup>

## Travel Within and Outside of Canada

Effective November 30, all travellers (12 years of age plus four months) will need to be vaccinated to travel within and outside of Canada, with very few exceptions. A valid COVID-19 molecular test will no longer be accepted as an alternative to vaccination unless travellers are exempt, such as due to a medical condition. (For prior coverage, see [GMS Flash Alert 2021-270](#), 3 November 2021.)

Until January 14, 2022, individuals in specified exempt groups can continue to enter Canada if unvaccinated or partially vaccinated, as well as take a connecting flight to their final destination. The connecting flight must be scheduled to depart within 24 hours of the departure of their flight to enter Canada. Additionally, until February 28, 2022, unvaccinated or partially vaccinated travellers can board a flight if they are departing Canada.

## Changes in the New Year

Currently, certain travellers are permitted to enter Canada without being fully vaccinated, such as individuals who have a valid work permit, study permit or approval letter. However, effective January 15, 2022, these individuals must be fully vaccinated with a government-approved vaccine to enter Canada. Specifically, the groups include:

- Individuals with a valid work permit, including temporary foreign workers (outside of those in the agriculture and food processing industries);
- Individuals travelling to reunite with family (unvaccinated children under 18 years of age will retain exemption if travelling to reunite with an immediate or extended family member who is a Canadian, permanent resident, or person registered under the Indian Act);
- International students who are 18 years old and older;
- Professional and amateur athletes; and
- Essential services providers, including truck drivers.

Effective January 15, 2022, unvaccinated or partially vaccinated travellers can only enter Canada if they meet certain limited criteria or exceptions, such as individuals who work in the agricultural or food processing workers, marine crew members, new permanent residents, resettling refugees, etc. Exempt unvaccinated travellers will continue to be required to meet testing, quarantine and other entry requirements. **Non-exempt unvaccinated or partially vaccinated foreign nationals will be prohibited from entering Canada.**

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## KPMG NOTE

### Key Considerations for Employers and Travellers

- Visa-exempt foreign nationals with a pending work application at a visa office abroad who were previously ineligible to apply at the port of entry due to their vaccination status may consider withdrawing their existing applications and applying for a work permit at the port of entry if they have a vaccine that is now accepted by the Canadian government.
- Travellers are strongly advised to review plans to get vaccinated as soon as they can in order to travel freely in and outside of Canada.

## KPMG NOTE (cont'd)

- Travellers should check if they are eligible to enter Canada and meet all entry requirements before heading to the border. In addition, some provinces and territories may have their own entry restrictions in place.
- To continue improving the processing of travellers, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) has launched a new feature in ArriveCAN called "Advance CBSA Declaration," which will allow travellers arriving at certain airports to electronically submit their customs and immigration declaration before arriving in Canada. This feature is currently available for travellers arriving at Vancouver International Airport only and is expected to launch at other airports soon.
- The government of Canada is looking into next steps in reopening additional Canadian airports to receive international passenger flights. Transport Canada is working closely with CBSA, PHAC, and airport partners to determine when and which airports can be reopened. More information will follow.

The government of Canada will continue to make appropriate adjustments to border measures and will consider further changes to the pre-entry test requirement for vaccinated Americans and others in subsequent phases. KPMG Law LLP's immigration team will continue to advise clients as we receive more information.

Travellers who have questions or concerns about their travel to Canada are encouraged to contact their qualified immigration counsel, employment counsel or KPMG Law LLP for further guidance.

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## FOOTNOTES:

1 See "Government of Canada announces adjustments to Canada's border measures" (November 19, 2021) at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2021/11/government-of-canada-announces-adjustments-to-canadas-border-measures.html> .

2 See "Adjustments to Canada's border and travel measures" (November 19, 2021) at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2021/11/adjustments-to-canadas-border-and-travel-measures.html> .

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## Contact us

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