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GMS Flash Alert

Immigration Edition

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Canada – Antigen Tests Accepted for Pre-Arrival Testing

The government of Canada is implementing significant policy changes for fully vaccinated travellers who enter Canada as of February 28, 2022.[1]

Previously, any person travelling to Canada was required to provide proof of a negative PCR test. The test had to be taken within 72 hours of a traveller's scheduled departure to Canada. Travellers had to wait 24 to 48 hours for the results of their pre-arrival polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests, which could cost C$100 per person or more. **Canada will now accept either a negative rapid antigen or PCR test from travellers. This applies to any traveller, regardless of nationality.**

WHY THIS MATTERS

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the government of Canada has issued several border measures to protect Canadian citizens and permanent residents from the spread of COVID-19. (For prior coverage, see *GMS Flash Alert* 2021-297, Dec. 3, 2021.)

The ability to take the rapid antigen test (and present the result), offers employees a cheaper and faster testing option than the PCR alternative.

The latest announcements will help facilitate travel to Canada and is an important step towards normalizing Canada's entry requirements and increasing certainty and predictability for travellers.

Antigen Tests Now Accepted As Part of Pre-Entry Measures

As of 12:01 am EST on February 28, travellers may use either a negative rapid antigen or PCR test to enter Canada.

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If using a rapid antigen test, the test must be authorized by the country in which it was purchased and must be administered by a laboratory, health-care entity or tele-health service the day before the flight to Canada.

PCR tests will still be accepted if the sample is taken with 72 hours of the flight to Canada. Furthermore, only PCR test results will be accepted to establish proof of a previous COVID-19 infection.

In addition, fully vaccinated travellers will only be required to complete post-arrival testing if they are randomly selected, and they will not be required to quarantine while awaiting their post-arrival test results.

Additional Changes to Border Measures

The Canadian government has also announced:

- All airports will now be able to receive international flights.
- All children under 12 years of age who are travelling with fully vaccinated adults will continue to be exempt from quarantine, without any conditions limiting their activities. For example, they will no longer need to wait 14 days before attending school, camp, or day-care.
- All travellers must continue to use the ArriveCan app.
- Canada will continue to accept positive PCR test results taken between 10 and 180 days before entering Canada.
- Unvaccinated travellers will continue to be tested on arrival and on Day 8 and will need to quarantine while awaiting their results. They will also need to continue to quarantine for 14 days.

These are transitory measures that will be re-assessed in the coming weeks/months.

KPMG NOTE

Key Considerations for Employers and Travellers

- Employers should advise their employees that as of February 28, rapid antigen tests will be accepted for entry to Canada if taken the day before their flight to Canada.
- Rapid antigen tests taken independently at home without the presence of a health professional will not be accepted.
- Travellers should verify if they are eligible to enter Canada and meet all entry requirements before heading to the border. Some provinces and territories may also have their own entry requirements in place.
- Fully vaccinated travellers will no longer be subject to mandatory PCR testing upon arrival. They will be subject to random selection and will not need to quarantine while waiting for their results.
- Unvaccinated travellers are still unable to travel to Canada unless they qualify under one of the pre-existing exemptions.

Individuals who have questions or concerns about the new measures are encouraged to contact their qualified immigration counsel or KPMG Law LLP for further guidance.

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FOOTNOTE:

1 Public Health Agency of Canada, News Release, "Government of Canada lightens border measures as part of transition of the pandemic response" (February 15, 2022).

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