



## Restrictions

### What restrictions are changing?

Effective 8 a.m. March 20, the remaining restrictions are lifted in areas of Halifax Regional Municipality and surrounding communities. As of that date, the same public health measures will apply across the province.

There are a few changes to the provincewide restrictions:

- the general gathering limit remains (10 indoors and outdoors) but you can have 10 visitors at your home, in addition to the people who live there
- immediate family members who live in the same household can be together when they are away from home, even if that is more than 10 people
- restaurants and licensed establishments can stop service by 11 p.m. and close by midnight
- fitness facilities continue to operate at 75 per cent capacity but can return to two metres between people for all activities

With restrictions lifted, the following is also allowed provincewide:

- events hosted by a recognized business or organization can have 150 outdoors or 50 per cent capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors
- events include social events, special events, sport events, arts and culture events, festivals, faith gatherings, weddings with receptions, and funerals with receptions and visitation
- meetings and training hosted by recognized businesses and organizations can have 150 outdoors or 50 per cent capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors and organized clubs can break into cohorts of 15 following the day camp guidelines
- physical distancing is required for meetings and training except when emergency responders need to be closer than two metres for training
- licensed establishments, unlicensed establishments such as community centres and charities, and organized clubs can host activities such as darts, cards, pool, bowling, bingo or karaoke following guidelines for these activities
- visitors are allowed in long-term care facilities
- visitors are allowed in adult residential centres and regional rehabilitation centres licensed by the Department of Community Services and residents can resume full community access
- retail businesses and malls operate at 75 per cent capacity and follow other public health measures
- sports practices, training and games and arts and culture rehearsals and performances can have 60 people without physical distancing
- sports games, competitions and tournaments are allowed within the team's or competitor's regular competitive schedule
- spectators are allowed if the business or organization hosting the event has a gathering plan that follows event guidelines

Adult day programs for seniors remain closed provincewide until seniors living outside long-term care facilities have an opportunity to receive COVID 19 vaccine.

COVID-19 protocols in public schools continue to be guided by Nova Scotia's Back to School Plan.

## **GENERAL GATHERING LIMIT OF 10**

### **What is the gathering limit?**

The general gathering limit is 10 both indoors and outdoors, provincewide.

### **How many people can you have in your home?**

You can have 10 visitors at your home without physical distancing, in addition to the people who live there. For example, if 5 people live in your home, you can have 10 visitors for a total of 15 people at an event or gathering at your home.

### **What if some of the people are small children or babies, do they count in the limit of 10?**

Yes. It doesn't matter how old people are, the limit is 10 visitors to your home, in addition to the people who live there.

### **Can your entire household go out together if there are more than 10 people?**

Immediate family members who live in the same household can be together without physical distance when they are away from home, even if that is more than 10 people. But whole families should not go into stores together if you can avoid it. This helps avoid physical distancing challenges for other customers and staff.

### **Can groups of 10 still get together at home or elsewhere?**

Across the province, you can have a close social group of up to 10 people without physical distancing. This group is typically the people you live with, and maybe a few more. You need to keep this group consistent and avoid belonging to multiple groups.

This group is for social purposes – it is not for workplaces. If you're doing things like skating at your local rink, having a meal at a restaurant, walking in a park, or attending a faith gathering, you can go with this group without physical distancing. But you must keep your group consistent – you can't go to the rink with one group, then to a restaurant with another, and so on.

A random group of 10 people should not form spontaneously. Businesses or organizations should not seat 10 random people together.

### **Can a group of 10 kids get together to play?**

A random group of kids should not get together to play. If your kids are playing with friends, they should be friends who you've chosen to be in your family's close social group. You need to think carefully about who to have in your group and keep it consistent instead of having multiple groups.

### **Why is important to only have one close social group of 10 people?**

We strongly encourage people to stick with the same close social group of 10 rather than switching the people in the group. People need to consider the following when choosing who to join in a close social group of up to 10:

- Is anyone at higher risk – 65 or older, especially with underlying health conditions, chronic disease, or compromised immune systems?
- Does anyone have frequent contact with the general public as part of their job or a higher risk of being exposed to COVID-19?
- Is anyone sick or showing symptoms that could be COVID-19?
- How may other close contacts do others have?

### **Are there other things you can do to keep your close social group of 10 safe?**

- Follow basic public health measures:
  - If you are unwell, stay home
  - Practice good hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette
  - Wear a mask when required and anytime physical distancing is a challenge
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth without washing hands first
- Try to keep the same people in your group of 10 – the more changes there are, the greater risk
- Understand who is at high-risk/vulnerable and continue to protect them
- Understand your own risk/vulnerability and consider who you are joining a group with
- Maintain physical distancing with anyone outside of your group and between groups
- Consider physical distancing within your group for activities that increase risk (e.g. singing)
- Don't have people in your group who should be self isolating
- Consider using non-medical masks even when you're not in a place that requires them if there are people in your group who are at higher risk
- Avoid sharing food and drinks within your group (shared bowls with dips, shared utensils, etc.)

### **Can there still be gatherings of 50?**

No. Across the province, we are eliminating the general gathering limit of 50 for now. At this time, that is too many people to have together without a recognized business or organization overseeing the event and making sure public health measures are followed.

### **If my business is too small for physical distancing, does the close social group of 10 apply?**

No, the close social group of 10 is meant for closer social interaction between families and friends. This group of up to 10 people can be closer than 2 metres/6 feet. We strongly encourage people to stick with the same group of 10 rather than switching the people in the group.

This is different from the rule for a business that is too small for physical distancing. These businesses can have no more than 10 clients or customers on the premises at a time and they must do their best to be physically distanced.

## **GATHERING LIMIT FOR EVENTS**

### **Are any community events allowed right now?**

Effective March 20, the same rules apply provincially. When events are hosted by a recognized business or organization, they can have 150 people outdoors or 50% of capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors. These events must stop any food or alcohol service by 11 p.m. and the event must end by midnight, the same as restaurants and bars.

This applies to social events and special events (such as community meals and fundraisers), arts and culture events (including performances and movie theatres), sport and recreation events, festivals, faith gatherings, weddings (including receptions), and funerals (including visitation and receptions).



### **Can there be church services or other faith gatherings?**

Yes. Across the province, faith gatherings can happen with a maximum of 150 people outdoors or 50% of an indoor venue's capacity to a maximum of 100. Physical distancing is required unless you are with members of your own household or close social group of up to 10.

### **Are weddings and funerals allowed right now?**

Effective March 20, the same rules apply provincewide. When events like weddings and funerals (along with receptions and visitation) are hosted by a recognized business or organization, they can have 150 people outdoors or 50% of capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors. These events must stop any food or alcohol service by 11 p.m. and the event must end by midnight, the same as restaurants and bars.

If an event is not hosted by a recognized business or organization, the gathering limit is 10.

If an event is held at a person's home, the gathering limit is 10 visitors, plus the people who live there (no matter who hosts it).

### **Can someone call themselves a wedding planner just for one family wedding in order to have the bigger limit?**

They could if they want to take on full responsibility for ensuring that everyone at the event follows all the public health. They would also have to follow business and tax laws.

### **If I rent a space for an event like a wedding but I do all the work myself, how many people can attend?**

If you are renting a space from a recognized business or organization, then that business/organization takes on responsibility for ensuring that everyone at the event follows all the public health measures.

Given that they are taking on this responsibility, you can have 150 outdoors or 50% of capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors. The business/organization should be aware of its responsibilities and ensure it has a solid contract with the renters.

### **How can a person plan a wedding or other event if the rules keep changing?**

We understand it is challenging to plan an event. However, we are in the middle of a pandemic. This situation demands that we respond quickly to changing epidemiology in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. That means the public health measures will continue to change to keep people safe and even save lives. If it is possible to postpone your event until after the pandemic, that will give you more certainty to make plans. If you choose to keep planning your event during the pandemic, there will be a risk of the rules disrupting your plans.

### **Does an event venue have to follow the sector plans for restaurants and bars?**

If the venue holds a permanent food establishment permit, it must follow the RANS reopening plan. For licensed events serving alcohol, the protocols for licensed establishments must be followed, as outlined in the public health order. Events must stop any food or alcohol service by 11 p.m. and end by midnight.

### **Does the gathering limit include the workers at an event?**

No, they are in their workplace which is not subject to the gathering limit. However, if the space is too small for physical distancing, such as a kitchen in a firehall, then there can be no more than 10 workers in the space at a time and they must practice physical distancing as much as possible.



**My business rents a room for weddings and parties and our maximum capacity is 150. Since the indoor limit is 100, can I have 100 guests in that room?**

No, the order allows gatherings of 50% of capacity up to a maximum of 100 people with physical distancing. So 50% of your capacity is 75 people.

**My business rents a room for weddings and parties and our maximum is 300. Since the limit is 50% of capacity, can I have 150 guests in that room?**

No, the order allows gatherings of 50% of capacity up to a maximum of 100 people with physical distancing. While 50% of your capacity is 150 people, you can only have a maximum of 100.

**Do gathering limits apply to restaurants?**

No, restaurants can operate at 100% capacity as long they maintain physical distance of 2 metres/6 feet or a physical barrier between tables, booths and single seats, and there are no more than 10 people in each group of diners.

**If bars and restaurants host events (like a concert or a wedding reception) do they follow the gathering limit of 50% of capacity to a maximum of 100 people?**

No, when hosting events, bars and restaurants continue to follow the rules and plans for their sectors.

**How can restaurants operate at full capacity if they have to ensure physical distancing?**

Restaurants (or liquor licensed establishments) may not be able to operate at normal, non-pandemic capacity. They can operate at 100% capacity with physical distancing. For some, that may mean having fewer tables than normal. It depends on how much space they have to work with and what measures they choose to put in place.

**How can the Q league have spectators if the indoor limit is 100?**

Several large facilities in the province have previously approved plans for hosting events with multiple groups that are kept separate. These facilities can resume operating with a limit of 150 people per group outdoors or 50% of capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors. Each group has their own entrance/exit, washroom and concessions. We're giving Scotiabank Centre and Centre 200 a limit of 150 per group indoors.

**What happens if a game goes into overtime?**

A sport event hosted by a business or organization can continue beyond midnight if the natural course of events leads to extended time of play such as overtime, but food and alcohol service must still stop at 11 p.m.

**How do people know what is considered a recognized business or organization?**

People have to use common sense. For example, a hotel is a recognized business that can host events like fundraisers or weddings in its ballrooms. A church is a recognized organization that can host faith gatherings of various types, as well as weddings and funerals. A theatre is a recognized business that can host performances.

**Where can I find more information about safe gatherings?**

Here are some useful resources for gatherings and events:

- [Guidance for holidays and celebrations](#)
- [Event guidelines](#)
- [Guidelines for venues and facilities](#)



- [Day camp guidelines](#) can be followed by organized clubs to have cohorts of 15 within the larger gathering limits

## **BUSINESSES**

### **Does the gathering limit apply to my retail business/office workplace, etc?**

The gathering limit of 150 outdoors or 50% of capacity up to a maximum of 100 indoors applies when a recognized businesses or organization hosts social events, arts and culture events, sport, recreation and physical activity events, special events, festivals, faith gatherings, weddings and funerals (including receptions and visitation).

Otherwise, gathering limits do not apply to businesses. Businesses and workplaces need to ensure employees and customers can maintain 2 metres/6 feet physical distance. So the number of people in the space will vary from business to business. If your space is too small for physical distancing, then you can have no more than 10 clients or customers on the premises at a time.

### **Are bars and restaurants allowed to open?**

Provincewide, restaurants and bars must stop service by 11 pm and close by midnight. They can offer takeout, delivery and drive-thru later. This isn't a reflection of how safe bars and restaurants are. It is simply to reduce the opportunity for prolonged social gatherings in close proximity without masks.

### **Can bars and restaurants have live music?**

Yes. They must continue to follow all the requirements in the public health order and their sector plans.

### **Are the casino, VLTs and First Nations gaming centres allowed to operate?**

Provincewide, casino, VLTs and First Nations gaming centres can operate but must stop food and alcohol service by 11 pm and close by midnight.

### **How are fitness and recreation facilities operating?**

Provincewide, fitness facilities like gyms and yoga studios can continue to operate at 75% capacity and return to 2 metres distance between people for all activities. Outdoor fitness classes can operate at full capacity. Fitness, recreation and leisure facilities are responsible for ensuring participants wear masks except when performing exercise.

### **Do the fitness facility rules apply to recreation and leisure facilities like rinks, arenas, gymnasiums, golf courses, etc?**

Generally, no. However, if the sport and recreation facility has a weight room, a cardio machine area or fitness classes, then the fitness facility rules apply in those areas – 75% capacity and 2 metres between people for all activities. Fitness, recreation and leisure facilities are responsible for ensuring participants wear masks except when performing exercise.

### **What are the restrictions for stores?**

Provincewide, retail businesses can operate at 75% capacity. Other retail rules include:

- Ensure customers and staff can maintain physical distance (2 metres/6 feet apart)
- Customers must maintain physical distance and wear non-medical masks when lined up to enter a retail business – both indoors and outdoors
- The business cannot play music louder than 50 decibels so that normal conversation is possible

**What's the definition of a retail business?**

A retail business is one that engages in the retail sale or rental of items to the public on ongoing basis at a fixed location.

**How many people can be in a retail store?**

The number of people who can be in a retail store depends on how much space you have. For this period of time, retail stores cannot have more than 75% of their maximum occupancy on the premises at a time. That includes both staff and customers. They must also ensure physical distancing is maintained.

**If I have reached 75% of my store's maximum occupancy, there isn't enough room for everyone to stay 2 metres/6 feet apart. What should I do?**

In this case, you set a lower limit on the number of people who are on the premises at a time to ensure physical distancing.

**Are there rules for shopping malls?**

In addition to the retail rules outlined above, the following is also required for malls:

- No more than 10 people at a time can line up at a retail business inside the mall and they must maintain physical distance
- People are not permitted to loiter in any area of the mall
- Directional markings are provided to manage the flow of people within the mall Furniture in common areas of the mall is removed or inaccessible
- Non-retail public areas in the mall must be closed, other than public washrooms, breastfeeding stations, and hallways that give access to stores
- The mall cannot play music louder than 50 decibels so that normal conversation is possible
- Food court vendors can open with public health measures in place including 2 metre/6 feet between tables

**Do farm farmers markets and flea markets have to close?**

These markets are considered retail operations if they have regular hours every day or week, the majority of their vendors are always the same, and the market serves as their retail outlet. Market operators need to ensure physical distancing and can only have 75% of the maximum occupancy, including vendors and customers. They need a COVID-19 prevention plan.

If the market is not a regular daily or weekly operation, they are considered special events. Special events are currently allowed provincewide. When they are hosted by a recognized business or organization, they can have 150 people outdoors or 50% of capacity to a maximum of 100 people indoors.

**Does the limit of 10 apply to day cares, day camps or before and after school programs?**

No, the limit of 15 without physical distancing remains in place for these settings.



### **What's the limit for a business meeting or training? Is physical distancing required?**

Provincewide, meetings and training can have 150 outdoors or 50% of capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors if they are hosted by:

- private businesses or organizations
- provincial or municipal government
- first responder organizations
- mental health and addictions support groups
- organized clubs (such as Scouts and Brownies)

Physical distancing is required. There is an exception for first responders – they can be closer than 2 metres/6 feet when necessary for aspects of their training (and to carry out their duties). When it is not necessary to be closer, they must maintain physical distance.

Organized clubs can break their group into cohorts of up to 15 without physical distancing, following the [day camp guidelines](#). That said, they should strive for physical distancing as much as possible.

## **ACTIVITIES**

### **What are the restrictions for sports and for arts and culture?**

Provincewide, there can be 60 people for sports training, practices and games or for arts and culture (ie performance arts) rehearsals and performances. This includes people directly involved, such as coaches, officials, drama, music and dance leaders, etc.

There can be no games, competitions or tournaments involving teams or individuals who would not regularly play against each other.

### **Can there be spectators for sports and for arts and culture performances?**

Provincewide, spectators are allowed when a recognized business or organization is hosting a sport, recreation or physical activity event or an arts and culture event. Aside from the people directly involved (noted above), there can be 150 spectators outdoors or 50% of capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors. The business or organization must have an approved gathering plan that follows [event guidelines](#).

These events must end by midnight. If there is food or alcohol involved, requirements for holders of food establishment permits and licensed establishments must be followed and food or alcohol service must stop by 11 p.m. Physical distancing is required among spectators unless you are with members of your own household or close social group of up to 10. Random, spontaneous groups of 10 people should not sit together.



School-based sport is following the same rules as non-school sports and performance arts.

Following the provincial Back to School plan, only people who are essential to facilitating the activity (players, coaches, officials, etc) may be present. Other non-essential adults, including spectators, continue to not be permitted into schools across the province.

If a school is holding practices, games, rehearsals, or performances at an outside facility, such as a municipal or privately owned building, spectators must follow the provincial gathering limit for spectators.

**What is the limit for beer leagues and pick-up games?**

They can have 60 people without physical distancing if they are run by a league or official organization.

Any games that require close physical contact and are not run by a league or official organization should only be played with members of your own household or close social group of up to 10 people.

**Can after school programs still happen? What's considered an after school program?**

After school programs offer care for children from Primary to Grade 6, five days a week for the entire school year. See more in the [Before and After School Programs Guidelines](#). These restrictions don't close after school programs.

**Can businesses like indoor playgrounds, bowling alleys, shooting ranges, golf courses, putting ranges, go-carts, climbing gyms, trampoline facilities, and escape rooms open? What about music and dance lessons?**

Across the province, recreation and leisure businesses can operate and must follow public health measures such as physical distancing and masks. They must ensure that participants are wearing masks.

**Can people get together to play darts, cards, pool, bowling, bingo or karaoke?**

Licensed establishments can host people for these activities. They must follow the rules for licensed establishments as well as the specific [guidelines for these activities](#).

Unlicensed establishments (such as charities) and organized clubs can host 150 people outdoors or 50% of capacity to a maximum of 100 indoors for these activities. They can break their group into cohorts of up to 15 without physical distancing, following the [day camp guidelines](#). That said, they should strive for physical distancing as much as possible.

The establishment or club takes on responsibility for ensuring that public health measures and the specific guidelines for these activities are followed.

**Could organizers of a concert or church service or any other type of gathering set up seating in groups of 10 since physical distancing with that size group isn't required?**

Businesses and organizations should not set up seating for groups of 10 and randomly seat people together. If you're hosting a concert or a church service or any other type of gathering, you should accommodate people who have formed a group of 10, but you also need to accommodate people who are not in a group of 10 or who are in a smaller group.



**Can there be overnight/sleepover camps such as for Girl Guides or children with disabilities?**

We stopped these types of camps early in the pandemic. They are still not be permitted for the time being and we recently updated the public health order to reflect this. This does not affect regular camping at campgrounds.

**Can a church host a retreat at an overnight camp?**

No, overnight camps hosted by recognized businesses or organizations are not permitted at this time. A church is a recognized organization.

**CHILD CARE / PARKS ETC / CARPOOL**

**Can child care centres, day camps or after school programs have 100 indoors/150 outdoors?**

Gathering limits do not apply to child care centres, day camps or after school programs. They can operate up to full capacity as long as they can follow the guidelines for their sectors.

In day camps and after school programs, children must be in groups of no more than 15 and the groups must stay 2 metres/6 feet apart. There can be closer contact within each group of 15.

**Can there be 150 people at a playground? Can 10 kids be in close contact at a playground?**

The gathering limits do not apply to people going to parks, beaches, trails, playgrounds, etc for recreation. If a gathering is planned in these spaces, the gathering limit is 10 unless it's hosted by a recognized business or organization.

If a group of 10 including parents/guardians and children go to a playground, they can be in close contact with each other but they would have to stay 2 metres/6 feet away from other people and groups. If 10 children arrive at a playground, they should not spontaneously form a group.

**Can people carpool without worrying about physical distancing?**

Yes, although people should carefully choose who to join in a group of 10 (or likely less in a vehicle) and be consistent with one group. Masks are recommended.

**COMPLIANCE**

**What should I do if there's a large informal gathering like a house party or other rules being broken?**

If you have a concern about a particular instance of public health measures not being followed, you can call your local non-emergency police number. Each person at an illegal event can be fined \$1000.

**What should I do if rules aren't being followed at a business?**

If you have concerns about how a business is operating, you could speak with the manager. If you feel it's necessary, you could contact the Safety Division at the Department of Labour and Advanced Education at 1-800-952-2687 or [LAESafetybranch@novascotia.ca](mailto:LAESafetybranch@novascotia.ca).



## **CONTINUING CARE**

### **Can a long-term care resident go to their family's home for a visit? Can family visit a resident in their facility?**

Provincewide, visitors are allowed in long-term care facilities and in adult residential centres and regional rehabilitation centres licensed by the Department of Community Services. Please contact the facility for more information.

Each resident can have 2 designated caregivers and facilities. Residents can only leave their facilities for medical/dental appointments or to go for a drive with 1 designated caregiver (with no other passengers, no stops or drive-thru). We cannot allow residents to visit their families' homes at this time.

The same is generally true for adult residential centres (ARC) and regional rehabilitation centres (RRC) licensed by the Department of Community Services. However, residents of these facilities have community visits for work and volunteering.

### **Can adult day programs operate?**

Adult day programs for seniors remain closed provincewide until seniors living outside long-term care facilities have an opportunity to receive COVID 19 vaccine.