



Phase 5 of reopening

Is there still a public health order? Will there still be a state of emergency?

There is still a [public health order](#) to capture a few measures that remain mandatory. The state of emergency needs to remain in effect to give force to the public health order.

What restrictions will be lifted? What restrictions will stay in place?

Now that we have moved to phase 5, most restrictions have been lifted. Only a few remain in place.

- There is no longer a requirement for physical distance.
- There are no longer gathering limits for events hosted by a recognized business or organization.
- For informal gatherings (not hosted by a business or organization), the informal gathering limits of 25 people indoors and 50 outdoors remain in place. [Guidelines](#) are available to help businesses and organizations host events safely.
- Masks are still required in indoor public places (the same as phase 4), even where proof of full vaccination is required. They can be removed for eating and drinking. They can be removed and then put back on when performers are singing or playing a wind instrument or when someone is public speaking.
- The [proof of full vaccination protocol](#) started October 4. Anyone age 12 or older who is not fully vaccinated will not be able to access discretionary, recreational or non-essential activities. There are minimal exceptions.
- People traveling from Canadian provinces and territories outside Nova Scotia must still self-isolate if they are not fully vaccinated (at least 7 days plus 2 negative tests). International travelers continue to follow federal requirements.
- Otherwise, the only restrictions that remain in place for the general population are those related to management of COVID-19 cases. For example, people with symptoms must still get tested, isolate while they wait for results and continue to isolate if they test positive.
- While most restrictions have been lifted, everyone should continue [sensible precautions](#) that have been helping us all stay safe. Workplaces should view COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses hazards to be mitigated under occupational health and safety legislation.

What are the details of the proof of vaccination protocol?

Effective October 4, [proof of full vaccination](#) is required to participate in discretionary, recreational or non-essential activities. Some examples include dining out, going to a fitness facility, or going to a movie, theatre performance, concert or sporting event. These are all important activities but they are also social activities that bring people together and give the virus opportunity to spread.



The requirement is for Nova Scotians age 12 and older. There are minimal exceptions and there are grace periods for youth to get vaccinated.

While there is no end date, the proof of full vaccination requirement is a short-term measure to help bring large groups of people together safely. It allows us to lift most restrictions within the province and keep moving forward even in the midst of the fourth wave.

People who are not yet fully vaccinated and want to participate in these activities should [book a vaccination appointment](#) as soon as possible. See more information and resources in [COVID-19 Protocol for Proof of Full Vaccination for Events and Activities](#).

Why are you keeping the border restrictions when other provinces aren't?

Our self-isolation requirement after travel for people who aren't fully vaccinated has been our main line of defence to protect Nova Scotians from COVID-19. It makes sense to keep that protection in place to help limit the impact of a fourth wave while we lift restrictions within the province.

What are some sensible precautions people should continue to do?

First, everyone who can get vaccinated should do so. Everyone should continue staying home when sick, washing hands regularly, coughing and sneezing into your elbow, and regularly cleaning high-touch surfaces. People should also continue to limit their travel, especially if they are not fully vaccinated.

What measures should workplaces continue to take?

First, employers should encourage their staff to get vaccinated. Many workplace safety practices should remain in place as part of general occupational health and safety efforts to protect employees and clients from both respiratory illnesses. For example, where businesses have invested in barriers, established cleaning protocols, and provided support for hand hygiene to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, they should keep them in place. Employers should support employees to stay home when they are sick.

Do all sectors that have COVID-19 prevention plans need to continue following those plans?

Sectors that had [approved COVID-19 prevention plans](#) still need them as part of their occupational health and safety obligations to treat COVID-19 as a hazard to be mitigated in the workplace. All sector organizations should update their plans to reflect current requirements and safety practices, post them on their websites and encourage their members to follow them.

Are masks still required in private workplaces?

Masks are still required in indoor public places – there is no change from phase 4. This includes private workplaces when people interact with the public, where there is poor ventilation and in common areas. Masks are still recommended when physical distance cannot be maintained in workplaces but it is not required.

Can a business or organization set its own policies requiring distancing or limiting the number of people, for example?

A business or organization should follow general guidance for living safely with COVID-19 in a highly vaccinated population. They can choose to set their own policies with safety measures for employees, volunteers and/or clients. From an occupational health and safety perspective, businesses need to treat COVID-19 and other illnesses as hazards to be mitigated.



Should people continue doing regular asymptomatic testing?

Now that we have a highly vaccinated population, regular asymptomatic testing is no longer recommended or available. People who are fully vaccinated and practicing healthy habits to avoid respiratory illnesses are at low risk for COVID-19.

We continue to target asymptomatic testing with mobile units and pop up sites as needed in communities where there are high cases and signs of community spread. If pop ups or mobile units are not in your area, that means you likely don't need asymptomatic testing unless you fall into one of these categories, in which case you can still [book test](#):

- I was at one of the exposure sites at the date and time identified in a recent Public Health public service announcement.
- I was in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 during the last 14 days.
- I have been outside of Nova Scotia in the last 14 days.
- I am scheduled for a medical procedure at a hospital and need a test prior to my appointment.
- I tested positive for COVID-19 on a rapid test and need to confirm my result.
- I was directed by Public Health to get tested.

The Nova Scotia Health Authority only offered general asymptomatic testing in the past to help manage the pandemic. People were never supposed to book tests at their sites for travel or other purposes. If a travel destination or someone else requires a negative test result, contact [PRAXES](#) or [Switch Health](#) for information about their testing services.

Regular testing has made me feel safe. Why can't we keep regular testing?

People who are fully vaccinated and practicing healthy habits to avoid respiratory illnesses are at low risk for COVID-19. That's why regular asymptomatic testing for the general population is no longer needed. We can't continue to dedicate valuable health system resources to something that is no longer warranted.

Will asymptomatic testing continue in workplaces or other specific settings?

About 400 employers are offering rapid testing programs with approval from the Department of Health and Wellness as part of general safety efforts in the workplace. This helps with our surveillance efforts. We will continue to target asymptomatic testing with mobile units and pop up sites as needed in communities where there are high cases and signs of community spread.

Is there likely to be another lockdown?

Living with COVID-19 in a highly vaccinated population is different than what we've seen in the past. We have good population immunity. People will get sick but not as severely. We're taking a cautious approach and keeping some restrictions in place so we can continue moving forward and avoid reinstating restrictions. That said, we are prepared to reinstate restrictions if necessary, likely targeted to a local area rather than provincewide.

Will Public Health still do contact tracing?

Public Health will contact and continue to follow all new lab-confirmed positive cases. However, they will only do contact tracing with close contacts who are not fully vaccinated.



Will you continue daily reporting of case numbers? Will you hold livestreamed briefings?

Since the pandemic began, we've been reporting daily case numbers through our online dashboard and this continues on weekdays. We will eventually shift to providing a summary news release once a week. Briefings will continue to be given when needed.

With no gathering limit, does that mean large events can happen?

Informal events and gatherings (ie not hosted by a recognized business or organization) must still follow the informal gathering limits of 25 indoors or 50 outdoors. The proof of full vaccination requirement does not apply. There is no physical distance requirement.

When an event is hosted by a recognized business or organization, there is no longer a gathering limit. The physical distance requirement has been lifted. [Guidelines](#) are available to help businesses and organizations host events safely.

If an event is held in an indoor public place, masks continue to be required (no change from phase 4). Masks are not required outdoors under the public health order but an organization could choose to require them for an outdoor event.

Also, everyone who is 12 and older needs to show [proof of full vaccination](#) to attend most events and activities hosted by recognized businesses and organizations that bring people together. This includes events of any size held at a rental facility. There are minimal exceptions.

Everyone should also continue to take sensible precautions for safe food and beverage service, hand hygiene, cleaning high touch surfaces, and wearing masks when you're around other people in indoor public places.

Can sports return to normal?

There are no gathering limits or physical distance requirements for organized sports practices, games, competitions and tournaments. However, people who are 12 and older need to provide [proof of full vaccination](#) to attend discretionary events and activities. Masks are recommended for players when possible (indoors and outdoors). They are required indoors for spectators and others. This includes school sports.

Will schools be back to normal in phase 5?

Almost everything is back to normal in schools but masks are still required for all grades.

Do businesses and organizations need to keep collecting contact information for contact tracing purposes?

Only bars and restaurants were required to collect contact information for contact tracing under the public health order. This is no longer required as of October 4 with the start of the proof of full vaccination requirement.