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Government of Canada introduces additional measures to address COVID-19 Omicron variant of concern

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News release

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On November 26, 2021, the World Health Organization classified B.1.1.529 as a variant of concern called Omicron. Since then it has been found in a number of countries and regions, including the confirmation of several travel-related cases in Canada.

That is why today, the Minister of Health, the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, the Minister of Transport, the Honourable Omar Alghabra, and the Honourable Marco Mendicino, Minister of Public Safety, announced additional border measures to reduce the risk of the importation and transmission of COVID-19 and its variants in Canada related to international travel.

Based on data from ongoing surveillance efforts and the latest public health advice, the Government of Canada is expanding the list of countries with entry prohibitions originally announced on November 26, 2021, to include Egypt, Nigeria and Malawi. Effective tomorrow, foreign nationals who have been in any of these countries within the previous 14 days will not be permitted entry into Canada:

- Botswana
- Egypt;
- Eswatini;
- Lesotho;
- Malawi;
- Mozambique;
- Namibia;
- Nigeria;
- South Africa; and
- Zimbabwe.

Canadian citizens, permanent residents and people with status under the *Indian Act*, regardless of their vaccination status or having had a previous history of testing positive for COVID-19, who have been in any of these 10 countries in the previous 14 days, will be subject to enhanced pre-entry and arrival testing, screening, and quarantine measures.

Moving forward, border testing surveillance will be adjusted based on the latest available evidence to further reduce the risk of importation of this variant. In the coming days, all fully vaccinated travellers arriving by air from departure points other than the United States will be subject to arrival testing. Fully vaccinated travellers will be required to quarantine while they await the results of their arrival test.

Unvaccinated travellers, with right of entry to Canada, will continue to be tested on arrival and day 8 and quarantine for 14 days. However, those arriving by air will now be required to stay in a designated quarantine facility or other suitable location while they await the result of their on arrival test.

The Government of Canada will continue to assess the evolving situation, monitor case data, and adjust border measures as required. The Government of Canada is working collaboratively with its provincial and territorial

counterparts. While the impact of all variants continues to be monitored in Canada, vaccination in combination with public health and individual measures, is working to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and its variants.

Quotes

“Our government continues to take unprecedented and swift action to protect the health and safety of Canadians as we introduce new robust, science-based measures to prevent COVID-19 variants of concern from being spread in Canada. The new requirements announced today are another layer of protection to safeguard Canadians' health.”

The Honourable Omar Alghabra
Minister of Transport

“We are taking quick action at our borders to mitigate travel related importations of the Omicron variant. While our monitoring systems are working well, we now know that the Omicron variant is present in Canada. We need to remain vigilant in our own actions. Vaccination and simple public health measures such as masking and limiting the number of persons we interact with slow down transmission, reduce hospitalization and death, and protect our health systems from being overwhelmed. We must all continue to do our part to protect all people in Canada.”

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos
Minister of Health

“While Canadians may be concerned about the most recent variant, be assured we will continue to enforce stringent measures at our borders to protect Canadians from COVID-19. Canada Border Services Agency officers will apply all measures deemed necessary to comply with entry requirements. I ask all Canadians to be patient as they wait to cross the border and check to ensure you have complied with all entry requirements before arriving at the Canadian border.”

The Honourable Marco Mendicino
Minister of Public Safety

Quick facts

- Canadian citizens, permanent residents, and people with status under the *Indian Act* who have been in these countries—Botswana, Egypt, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, and Zimbabwe—in the 14 days before travel to Canada will be required to:
 - Obtain, within 72 hours of departure, a valid negative COVID-19 molecular test in a third country before continuing their journey to Canada,
 - Complete testing upon arrival to Canada, regardless of their vaccination status or having had a previous history of testing positive for COVID-19,
 - Required to complete a test on Day 8 after arrival and quarantine for 14 days.
 - Those arriving by air will be required to stay in a designated quarantine facility while they await their arrival test result. They will

be permitted onward travel once they have received a negative arrival test result.

- Those arriving by land may be allowed to proceed directly to their suitable quarantine location. If they do not have a suitable and robust quarantine plan—where they will not have contact with anyone with whom they haven't travelled with—or do not have private transportation to their place of quarantine, they will be directed to stay at a designated quarantine facility.
- There will be increased scrutiny of quarantine plans for travellers from these countries and rigorous monitoring to ensure travellers are complying with quarantine measures. Further, PHAC is contacting travellers, regardless of their vaccination status or having had a previous history of testing positive for COVID-19, who have entered Canada from these countries in the past 14 days to direct them to be tested and to quarantine while they wait for the results of those tests.
- As of November 30, 2021, six cases of the Omicron variant of concern in Canada have been confirmed.
- In February 2021, the Government of Canada increased its capacity to find and track variants of concern in Canada by investing \$53 million in an integrated Variants of Concern Strategy. The Government of Canada is working with provinces and territories and the Canadian COVID Genomics Network and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research on surveillance, sequencing and scientific efforts to detect known and potentially emerging COVID-19 virus variants of concern.
- As of today, vaccination is required for travel within and out of Canada. A valid COVID-19 molecular test is no longer accepted as an alternative to vaccination unless travellers are eligible for one of the limited exemptions, such as a medical inability to be vaccinated. Travellers

should contact their airline or railway company to obtain the necessary form and submit it in accordance with their carrier's approval process. Effective today, fully vaccinated Canadian citizens, permanent residents or individuals registered under the *Indian Act* who depart and re-enter Canada by land or by air within 72 hours of leaving the country do not have to provide a pre-entry molecular test result.

- [ArriveCAN](#) remains mandatory for everyone, regardless if travellers enter by land/air/marine or how long they were away from Canada. **All travellers** must submit their mandatory information in [ArriveCAN](#) (free mobile app or website), including proof of vaccination in English or French and a quarantine plan **before** arriving in Canada.

Associated links

- [Travel Information](#)
- [ArriveCan](#)
- [CanCOGeN](#)

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