



OFFICE OF THE CHIEF PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER

Public Health Advisory – January 7, 2022

YELLOWKNIFE January 7, 2022 – The Office of the Chief Public Health Officer (OCPHO) has reviewed the available information related to the incubation period of the Omicron variant of COVID-19. Individuals infected with the Omicron variant are symptomatic or test positive earlier in the lifecycle of the disease with a median of three (3) days. It is known that fully vaccinated individuals with COVID-19 infection who are not immunocompromised also clear their infection earlier than those who are not fully vaccinated. Based on this information the Chief Public Health Officer (CPHO) is shortening the isolation requirements as outlined in the updated Public Health Order (PHO). The PHO will go into effect today, January 7, 2022 at 5:00PM. Full details and copies of the order will be available on the [GNWT COVID-19 website under the Current Public Health Orders](#).

The information provided below highlights the more significant changes to isolation requirements for individuals in the Northwest Territories (NWT). For full details of how the changes may impact you please visit the [understanding isolation page on our website](#).

Isolation for Travellers Entering the NWT

For [fully vaccinated](#) travellers no isolation is required. Individuals are required to complete a rapid antigen test (RAT) at home on the day of arrival to the NWT or Day One (1) and take an additional Day Four (4) test if they work with a vulnerable population or in a healthcare setting, are travelling to a small NWT community or are returning from international travel within the past eight (8) days. A positive RAT test result must be reported to ProtectNWT by phone at 8-1-1 or email ProtectNWT@gov.nt.ca.

Travellers who are [not fully vaccinated](#) must self-isolate for seven (7) full days after arrival to the NWT and can stop self-isolating on Day Eight (8). The self-isolation period can be reduced to five (5) full days if a negative test, delivered by a health care professional in a clinic or health centre, is received on day six (6).

Isolation for Individuals Infected with COVID-19

Anyone that receives a positive COVID-19 test is required to isolate for 10 full days. Isolation starts upon your arrival to the NWT, upon symptom onset or once a positive test result is received, whichever is last to occur.

Isolation can be reduced to seven (7) full days if all of the following applies:

- Fully vaccinated
- Have no serious immune compromise (receiving biologic therapy or high-dose prednisone for an autoimmune disease, have had a solid organ transplant, or am currently undergoing active cancer therapy).
- [Use of mask when](#) outside your residence for three additional full days.
- Either no symptoms, or symptom improvement and no fever for the past 24 hours.
- Have not been provided any additional direction from a healthcare provider or public health official.

Isolation for Household COVID-19 Contacts

Individuals living or staying in a home where someone is diagnosed with a COVID-19 infection are required to isolate for 10 full days, unless otherwise directed by a health care provider.

Given the infectiousness of the Omicron variant it is likely that infections have already occurred by the time an infection is discovered within the household. The 10 day period, with no reductions, increases the likelihood that everyone in the home is no longer infectious after 10 days.

Isolation for Close (non-household) Contacts

Identified close contacts are required to isolate for seven (7) full days from the date of the contact/exposure with the individual that has a COVID-19 infection.

Isolation can be reduced to five (5) full days if all of the following criteria apply to the contact:

- have had a booster dose of vaccine (three doses);
- no symptoms have developed;
- wear a mask when outside of your residence, including outdoors, for five additional days following the end of your isolation period; and
- have not been provided any additional direction from a healthcare provider or public health official.

Essential Services and Critical Infrastructure

In order to ensure business continuity and limit interruptions in the delivery of essential services and critical infrastructure, businesses, organizations and facilities that provide critical public safety and infrastructure services that could be impacted by isolation requirements outlined in this order may apply to the CPHO via email, CPHO@gov.nt.ca, for an exemption to some isolation requirements. Please apply for this exemption as soon as possible to ensure it is in place before it is needed.

Persons may direct inquiries about public health orders to ProtectNWT at protectNWT@gov.nt.ca or call 8-1-1 (in the Northwest Territories) or 1-833-378-8297. Full details and copies of the order will be available on the [GNWT COVID-19 website under the Current Public Health Orders](#).

Advice and Recommendations from the CPHO

It is recommended that anyone entering the NWT follow the advice outlined in the "[Know what to do for 72](#)" poster. Being diligent and minimizing your household contacts during the shorter incubation period of the Omicron variant will help slow the spread of COVID-19 in the NWT.

Assume that Omicron is present in the public spaces you frequent and at gatherings you attend. The variant is highly infectious and spreads more rapidly over previous COVID-19 variance.

As an event organizer or business it is important to consider the following:

- Are there additional reasonable measures I could undertake to further mitigate risks to customers or participants?
- Am I properly implementing all of the safety precautions I outlined in my application to vary?
- Is this event necessary right now?

As a customer or potential attendee of an event please consider the following:

- Have I taken the appropriate steps to [increase my safety nets](#)? Consider vaccination (including booster), wearing a well fitted and constructed mask, maintaining physical distances, etc.
- Are there measures I can take to further reduce my risks?
- Am I comfortable with the level of risk in sharing public spaces with individuals likely infected with COVID-19?
- Is my attendance at this event or gathering important enough right now?

If you become infected with COVID-19 it is important to remember that the majority of individuals infected with COVID-19 will recover safely at home. It is recommended you isolate in place. If you are hosting someone in your home that becomes sick or tests positive for a COVID-19 infection please continue to isolate together as Omicron is highly contagious and it is very likely other members of the household are already infected.

Attribution

All commentary is attributable to Dr. Kami Kandola, Chief Public Health Officer for the Northwest Territories.

Relevant links

- [NWT COVID-19 Dashboard](#)
- [Know What to do For 72 Information](#)
- [GNWT Daily COVID-19 Symptom Check](#)
- [Understanding Isolation](#)
- [Isolating Safely at Home](#)
- [GNWT COVID-19 website](#)
- [Vaccination Bookings](#)

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