

News Release

Health
Education and Early Childhood Development
COVID-19

Province enters next phase of living with COVID-19 on Monday, March 14

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FREDERICTON (GNB) – Actions taken by New Brunswickers over the past two years have contributed to the lifting of all remaining mandatory COVID-19 measures on Monday, March 14, at 12:01 a.m., according to Public Health officials.

Public Health will continue to provide advice and guidance on how people can reduce their risk and will also provide COVID-19 surveillance. They will alert the public when there is increased risk due to the virus spreading, similar to what is done for other communicable diseases.

The lifting of remaining mandatory restrictions means residents will no longer be required to wear masks in public spaces or limit the size of gatherings. All businesses and organizations will be permitted to operate at full capacity without the requirement for physical distancing.

“With the vaccination uptake in the province, the ongoing management of our hospitals, and the commitment of New Brunswickers over the past two years, we are able to remove mandatory restrictions,” said Dr. Yves Léger, acting deputy chief medical officer of health. “The virus has not left the province but as we move forward, I am confident that we can take the lessons we have learned throughout this pandemic and manage our personal risks and protect ourselves and those around us.”

While mandatory restrictions will cease, some facilities and businesses may choose to maintain their own policies on public health practices which can help protect their staff and patrons from respiratory infections, including COVID-19, influenza and common colds. These practices include getting vaccinated, staying home when sick, proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, and maintaining ventilation systems. All employers and employees must adhere to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, which explains the duties and obligations related to the transmission of communicable diseases.

Isolation will no longer be required among the general public, however, people are encouraged to stay home if they are sick. Within vulnerable sectors a five-day isolation period for anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 is still recommended by Public Health. This includes people residing in long-term care facilities, shelters, and correctional facilities. For now, masking will continue for those working or visiting facilities where patients or residents are more vulnerable to COVID-19 infection.

Vaccination clinics

People who are eligible and require a COVID-19 vaccine or booster should book their appointment with a [regional health authority vaccination clinic](#) or at a [participating pharmacy](#). The mass clinics run by regional health authorities will remain operational after March 14 until the end of the month. In April, participating pharmacies and regional public health offices will provide COVID-19 vaccines and boosters. Children aged 5-18 will also be able to receive their vaccines during regular school-based immunization program appointments.

Testing

There will be no changes to requirements for PCR and rapid testing kits. People with symptoms are still encouraged to book a PCR test or obtain a rapid test kit [through the online portal](#).

Hospital policies

Access to health-care facilities such as hospitals has always been subject to specific infection prevention control measures (IPC). Patients and designated support people entering facilities operated by the regional health authorities will continue to: be asked screening questions related to COVID-19, required to disinfect their hands, respect physical distancing and wear a medical, KN-95 or N-95 mask.

General visitors will still be prohibited. Eligible patients may be visited by a designated support person. Guidelines for designated support people are available on the Horizon Health Network or Vitalité Health Network websites.

These IPC measures will evolve over time as the risk within hospitals decreases and will be communicated by the regional health authorities through their websites and other relevant communication channels.

Update on schools and child-care facilities

In alignment with Public Health's recommendations for the general public, restrictions in schools will be lifted when students return from March break on Monday, March 14. This means masks will no longer be mandatory. However, schools will continue to ensure they maintain a supportive environment for everyone, including for students and staff who wish to continue wearing a mask.

Families and school staff will no longer be required to self-report cases of COVID-19 to schools and child-care facilities as part of their own contact tracing. As such, the department will no longer report on the number of cases in schools or in child-care facilities. Public Health will continue to monitor absenteeism rates as always as a proxy for potential circulating viruses such as the flu.

Students and staff should continue to stay home when they are sick and practise good hygiene, such as handwashing and covering coughs and sneezes. Families must still notify their school or child-care facility when a student is absent due to illness or for some other reason.

Physical education and music classes will return to normal, although staff are encouraged to teach these classes outdoors when the weather permits. Proof of vaccination is no longer required to participate in any extracurricular or intramural activities, clubs or sports.

Current cleaning and disinfecting protocols will continue. Portable HEPA filters will continue to operate in schools that are without integrated ventilation systems.

Policies at long-term care facilities

Long-term care facilities, including special care homes and nursing homes, will continue to follow guidance provided by Public Health related to COVID-19 to protect those who are vulnerable to severe illness and hospitalization. Public Health officials understand the facilities will work to establish a balance between ensuring an appropriate level of protection for residents and allowing access to visitors, especially family members.

The facilities have been advised of the policies and protective measures, including the wearing of masks and isolating those who are ill, to address any outbreaks of COVID-19. Visitors are required to wear a mask, however, they may remove their mask when in a resident's room at the resident's discretion. The Department of Social Development will continue to ensure that standards and policies are followed through regular inspections.

COVID-19 reporting

Public Health will continue to monitor COVID-19 in the province. However, updates will move to weekly reporting. Beginning the week of March 14, the [COVID-19 dashboard](#) will be updated weekly for the remainder of the month of March as Public Health transitions to a new reporting format. The weekly report will be published on Tuesday with data up until, and including, the previous Saturday.

"New Brunswickers should incorporate good public health practices in all aspects of their lives," said Léger. "These practices are beneficial no matter the number of cases or hospitalizations in the province."

Assessing personal risk

New Brunswickers are encouraged to assess and manage their personal risk and to continue using public health preventive measures that can decrease their risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19.

When assessing personal risk, people should consider their own risk factors for severe illness and hospitalization as well as those of family members and friends, in addition to the settings in which they interact.

Personal risk factors for severe illness include:

- being 50 or older;
- being immunocompromised;
- having chronic conditions; and
- not being fully vaccinated and boosted, if eligible.

Those who have risk factors should consider additional preventive measures such as:

- avoiding or limiting time spent in crowded or poorly ventilated indoor places;
- minimizing close contact with anyone who has cold-like symptoms; and
- continuing to use a mask, distancing and frequent hand washing.