

# Living with COVID-19

PROTECTIVE HEALTH MEASURES





# LIVING WITH COVID-19

---



## INTRODUCTION

**Throughout the pandemic, the people of New Brunswick made great sacrifices to protect themselves and each other. We adapted our behaviours according to the colour phase alert of the zone that reflected the level of COVID-19 activity. By following the public health guidelines for each colour phase, and restricting border traffic, we were able to hold strong until COVID-19 vaccinations arrived.**

When mandated restrictions are lifted under the province's COVID-19 recovery plan, the province will return to Green. It does not represent "the end of the pandemic." We will continue to encourage preventative public health measures. Best practices of personal protective measures and health hygiene will not only help prevent the spread of COVID-19, but of many other respiratory illnesses such as the cold and influenza.

As we reconnect and resume activities, we must also recognize the stress caused by multiple or rapid changes. Some people may struggle more than others with these changes. With this awareness, it is essential for New Brunswickers to continue to be kind and mutually supportive throughout these changes and beyond.

## LIVING WITH COVID-19

---



### PURPOSE

**This resource provides an overview of ways protective health measures can be incorporated into our lives to protect businesses, organizations, and communities.**

It is a supplementary resource that does not replace applicable legislation or requirements by licensing or regulating bodies for businesses, organizations, or service providers. It is not intended to set new health and safety practices.

The scope of this document is to provide information on public health measures, all of which existed prior to the pandemic, to mitigate risks as assessed by individuals, businesses, communities, and organizations.



## LIVING WITH COVID-19

---



## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

**We are learning to live with COVID-19 and its variants. This will involve businesses, communities, and organizations moving away from short-term mandatory requirements for their daily operations. Instead, they need to be proactive in thinking about how their activities and events can promote a healthy environment for New Brunswickers in the long-term.**

With the understanding that COVID-19 is not going to disappear any time soon, preventing the spread of this virus should still be on everyone's agenda. Core protective health measures remain important tools to limit the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses that impact absenteeism, such as colds and influenza. This is particularly important for those who are under-vaccinated and vulnerable.

Think of your daily operations and consider how protective health measures can be maintained or adopted to promote health and well-being long-term.

By incorporating knowledge learned from COVID-19, individuals, businesses, communities, and organizations can help protect against many respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19.

# LIVING WITH COVID-19

---

## VACCINATION

**COVID-19 vaccines are effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalizations, long-haul COVID, and death.**

Based on what we know about the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines, having a high number of people vaccinated within a population provides both individual and community protection. This will reduce the overall number of people who test positive for COVID-19. However, it is expected that there will still be some people who test positive and experience milder disease, even if they are fully immunized.

There will be people who will not be fully vaccinated, for whatever reason. It is important to ensure that they are not subject to stigmatization. There will also be fully vaccinated people whose immune systems may not wage a strong defense due to illness, age, or medical treatment. They may choose to use additional layers of protection every day, or when conditions indicate increased COVID-19 activity in their area.

### **Protective health measures to be considered:**

- Encourage your employees, participants, and volunteers to get fully vaccinated.
- Connect individuals with **reliable information about COVID-19 vaccines**, as well as the benefits of vaccination against seasonal influenza.
- Provide time during the workday to allow employees to get their COVID-19 vaccination.





## LIVING WITH COVID-19

---



## ADDITIONAL HEALTH MEASURES

**Vaccination is only one layer of protection. Other protective health measures also help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses.**

### **These include:**

- Face coverings and physical distancing
- Hand washing and respiratory etiquette
- Cleaning and disinfecting
- Staying home when sick
- Getting tested when symptomatic



## LIVING WITH COVID-19

---

### FACE COVERINGS AND PHYSICAL DISTANCING

**When mask use and physical distancing are no longer mandatory in indoor public spaces, there may be individuals who choose to continue this personal protective practice.**

These two measures help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. These layers of protection are encouraged in situations where people gather or when illness levels are high in the community.

Businesses, communities, and organizations may choose to maintain a policy for patrons and participants who enter their premises to continue to wear a mask. Recognizing that some individuals are unable to wear a mask, the operator or organizer should respectfully offer alternative ways to access the services. A flexible approach to face masking and physical distancing provides employees, patrons, and participants with the opportunity to protect themselves and others.

#### **Protective health measures to be considered:**

- Foster a non-discriminatory atmosphere where individuals feel comfortable and welcome to wear a non-medical mask and to keep their distance.
- Consider keeping protective barriers in place. Plexiglass and sneeze guard barriers limit employee and a patron's exposure to all respiratory viruses and will provide ongoing protection for unvaccinated or vulnerable employees and patrons.
- Plan traffic flow and spaces that allow people to move safely within the facility.
- Consider signage to indicate traffic flow and separate entrances and exits as well as congregation areas to limit unnecessary exposure to respiratory viruses.



## LIVING WITH COVID-19

---

### HAND WASHING AND RESPIRATORY HYGIENE

Hand washing and respiratory hygiene are important layers of protection from getting sick and spreading illness to others.

These practices include covering the mouth and nose with a tissue or elbow when coughing and sneezing, throwing the tissue into the garbage after use, and immediately washing hands or using hand sanitizer.

#### Protective health measures to be considered:

- Provide hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol or hand washing facilities at all entrances and exits, as well as near highly touched surfaces such as elevators and check-outs.
- Keep signs visible to remind employees, patrons, and participants to **properly hand wash** or sanitize and to use good respiratory hygiene practices.





## LIVING WITH COVID-19

---

### CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

Cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces are significant in controlling the spread of viruses and other microorganisms.

**Protective health measures to be considered:**

- Continue regular cleaning and disinfecting of all general surfaces that are frequently touched, such as doorknobs, handrails, equipment, etc. Increase the frequency of cleaning with increased use.
- Ensure cleaning and disinfecting products are in accessible areas to encourage customers to self-clean and disinfect (e.g. shopping carts and baskets).
- Use environmentally acceptable **cleaning and disinfecting products for COVID-19**.



## LIVING WITH COVID-19

---



## HEALTHY WORKPLACE POLICIES

**Employees, employers and their patrons all have an important role to play in fostering a healthy work environment.**

To support your efforts to maintain a vibrant and healthy workforce, refer to WorkSafeNB, as well as the Public Health Agency of Canada's table for recommended **protective measures based on level of risk and vaccination status**.

### **Protective health measures to be considered:**

- Consider keeping screening tools at entrances to discourage employees and patrons from coming into the establishment when sick, to get tested when two or more COVID-19 symptoms develop, and to stay home until well.
- Encourage individuals to stay home when sick and to get tested. Using an established protocol when staff call in sick or become ill during their shift will help ensure a healthy and productive workforce.
- Consider using regular rapid point of care **testing in the workplace** for early detection of outbreaks.
- Suggest employees wear a mask in situations when staying home is not an option until COVID-19 has been ruled out.



## LIVING WITH COVID-19

---

### PROCESS FOR WORKPLACE ILLNESS AND EXPOSURE

**Even with higher vaccination rates, it is expected that there will continue to be people who test positive for COVID-19.**

Current evidence indicates that fully vaccinated individuals will be less susceptible to illness, and/or experience mild illness. Nevertheless, as a society, we will still need to take efforts to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Public Health will continue to support individuals, workplaces, organizations, and communities to reduce transmission when outbreaks occur.

Through ongoing surveillance and communication, New Brunswickers will be kept informed about how to stay healthy wherever they live, work, and play.

#### ***Public Health Act:***

Once the Mandatory Order is removed, the **Public Health Act** and the New Brunswick Reportable Diseases and Events Guide will remain in effect. These long-standing resources provide Public Health with the authority and operational framework to act in the event of communicable disease outbreaks.

- Follow the directions provided by Public Health if your business or organization experiences a COVID-19 exposure or if someone on staff tests positive.
- Advise staff to adhere to Public Health advice regarding isolation and contact notification, should they test positive for COVID-19.
- Use the recommended communication tools provided by the Regional Medical Officer of Health for contact notification, outbreak management, and public advisory messaging.



#### ***Occupational Health and Safety Act:***

Employers and employees must also adhere to requirements contained within the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* regarding duties and obligations related to communicable disease transmission. Please refer to **WorkSafeNB** for more information.

## LIVING WITH COVID-19

---



## PLAN FOR SAFER TRAVEL

**Before travelling, each individual must consider what is an acceptable travel risk.**

COVID-19 is a rapidly changing landscape both nationally and internationally. Careful monitoring of the level of illness in destinations around the world is important to consider when planning a trip for work or leisure. The level of risk will depend on the vaccination rate and number of active cases in the destination area.

**Protective health measures to be considered:**

- Recommend individuals be fully vaccinated before travelling, whenever possible.
- When travel to high-risk destinations is unavoidable, necessary or desired, try to adopt as many protective health measures as you can to decrease risks associated with travel.
- Be prepared. Know in advance what travel regulations are for your intended destination, including rules for COVID-19 cases should you be infected, and the rules for your return home.



## LIVING WITH COVID-19

---



## LIVING WITH COVID-19

**As we learn to live with COVID-19, some people will feel excited and eager to resume their pre-pandemic lifestyle. Others will feel stress, anxiety and worry.**

It's important to understand that feeling afraid or unsure about getting out into the public again is normal. We've all been through a very difficult time. For information related to mental health, please visit the following website: [Bridge the gapp](#). It is a knowledge centre for information related to mental health as well as online resources and programs to assist those in need. A directory of services in your community can be accessed by visiting the [Bridge the gapp](#) or 211NB websites, or by calling 2-1-1.

It will be important moving forward that we are supportive of each other's personal protective habits and risk tolerances. Like many other infectious diseases, COVID-19 will not be eliminated. We will need to continue to protect ourselves, our loved ones, and our communities.

We thank every citizen of New Brunswick for their actions since the pandemic began. Together, we will build back better.