

That includes:

- Avoiding unnecessary travel.
- Getting vaccinated and encouraging your loved ones to do the same.
 - Getting your booster shot when possible .
- Keeping your bubble small as you celebrate the season.
 - Avoiding large public gatherings.
- Wearing a mask.
- Keeping your holiday bubbles small.
- Getting tested and self-isolating if you have any COVID symptoms.

Dr. Patterson's sound judgement has kept Nunavut largely protected in the past two years. We need to keep following his advice.

The people most impacted by the pandemic have been our front-line healthcare workers. I want to thank our nurses, doctors, and community healthcare providers for their tireless work in the past two years. You continue to be the heroes in our communities.

Finally, I want to wish everyone happy holidays and Merry Christmas. Remember, the best gift you can give your family is good health.

Be kind and stay safe.

Qujannamiik.

For the latest COVID-19 information and GN Departments updates in all languages:

<https://www.gov.nu.ca/health/information/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>; <https://www.gov.nu.ca>



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Minister of Health Update:

Good morning,

I want to begin by recognizing all the health staff who have been working tirelessly over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Your efforts have been vital to the success Nunavut has seen in the battle against this virus. You have all put in long hours and many have not had an opportunity for much time off. Some of you will continue working over the holidays and I want you all to know your sacrifice and dedication to the care of Nunavummiut is incredible. Matna, Qujannamiik. I know I, and all Nunavummiut, are grateful for all the work you have done and will continue to do.

My message for Nunavummiut at this time is that unfortunately, our health care system is stretched extra thin across Nunavut in the short term. Our staffing resources are limited, and although we have been working hard to recruit and retain the health professionals needed across the territory, service reductions will be felt in many communities over the holidays. This includes some reduced access to vaccinations such as the flu vaccine and the COVID-19 vaccine. Our challenges are related to a national trend in health staffing, where the pandemic has negatively impacted the workforce in many ways.

I would like to ask Nunavummiut to recognize the effort and sacrifice our health staff have made, and the stress that health staff are under at the moment with the threat of the Omicron variant.

I am asking Nunavummiut to do their part to stay safe from COVID-19 over the holidays. It's true, Omicron is a new threat. But we all know how to stay safe – keep gatherings small, avoid unnecessary travel, stay home if sick, wear a mask, get vaccinated, wash your hands often. Please do your part to keep your family, your community, and our territory safe.

It's Christmas, people should be able to have fun and celebrate. I believe it's possible to stay safe and celebrate the season; if we all stay vigilant and remember the lessons of the past year.

I hope everyone has a Merry Christmas and happy holidays.

Thank you.

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Chief Public Health Officer Update:

Good morning,

In light of quickly changing information about the Omicron variant, we have had to make some difficult decisions. We have immediately rescinded the recent order to allow communities larger gatherings over the holidays. This decision was not made easily or lightly, but this is necessary due to the increased risk Omicron poses.

Evidence shows that Omicron can spread very quickly, even in those who have had 2 doses, and we need to change our response to match this increased threat. We strongly recommend against all non-essential travel at this time. Those who do choose to travel and return to Nunavut with their proof of vaccination are asked to isolate at home for 14 days upon returning to territory. This includes avoiding all gatherings. Everyone should limit their visits to congregate settings with at-risk individuals, such as Elders' facilities and long-term care homes. If you are planning to gather, please do so safely and keep your social bubbles small.

For those communities planning to hold events such as community games in arenas and community halls, they must fall within the current gathering limits, and cannot exceed 50% capacity or 100 people maximum, whichever is lower. This is critical to slow the potential spread of the virus.

We also recommend against inter-community gatherings and travel. If you travel to other communities for events or to visit, you will increase the risk of spreading Omicron within Nunavut. There is a strong possibility that we will have to cease travel in and out of a community, should we identify a positive case of COVID-19. Anyone who travels to another community should be prepared to stay until travel restrictions are lifted. This is necessary to ensure quick containment of potential Omicron infections.

I cannot stress enough the need for people to follow the public health measures and wear a mask. Evidence shows medical masks are effective in helping reduce the risk of contracting and spreading Omicron. If you cannot get a medical mask, three-layer masks do show some success in limiting transmission.

Symptoms with Omicron can be different from other COVID-19 infections. It is very difficult to distinguish Omicron from the common cold. For this reason, at the onset of any symptoms, cough, sneezing, sore throat, running nose, please isolate and contact the COVID-19 hotline at 1-888-975-8601 to get tested.

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<https://www.gov.nu.ca/health/information/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>; <https://www.gov.nu.ca>



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There are simply too many unknowns, and too many risks that may jeopardize Nunavummiut's health. We do know that people who have received their booster shot are between 75% and 80% less likely to experience severe infection or hospitalization due to the Omicron variant. We are strongly urging everyone to get vaccinated. If you have had two doses, get the booster.

Protecting Nunavut from COVID-19 is everyone's responsibility, and we must keep working hard. It's been a long two years. I know you're exhausted, but it's not yet time to let up on our efforts. We have to remember that our health and safety is based on the layers of protections we have put in place. The public health measures, wearing masks, isolating when you are asked to and the vaccine all combine to create an effective shield against COVID-19. There must be done together, because each individual layer is not enough.

I thank all Nunavummiut for their patience and co-operation. Happy holidays and Merry Christmas. Be safe and stay healthy.

For all the latest information and resources about COVID-19 in Nunavut, go to:
<https://www.gov.nu.ca/health/information/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

For the latest information on current public health restrictions, go to:
<https://www.gov.nu.ca/health/information/nunavuts-path>

For information on upcoming vaccine clinics go to:
<https://gov.nu.ca/health/information/covid-19-vaccination>

For the latest COVID-19 information and GN Departments updates in all languages:
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