



Proof of Full Vaccination Policy

What is Nova Scotia's proof of vaccination policy? How long will it be in place?

As of October 4, anyone in Nova Scotia who is 12 and older will need to provide proof of full vaccination to participate in most events and activities that bring groups of people together. There are minimal exceptions. There isn't an end date but it's a short-term measure to allow large groups of people to gather together safely with no more formal gathering limits. It will allow us to continue moving forward with our reopening and have the best chance of staying open. See details in the [protocol](#).

What will the policy apply to?

People need proof of full vaccination to go to or participate in discretionary, non-essential events, activities and services that gather people together, including but not limited to:

- full-service restaurants where patrons sit at tables to be served, both indoors and on patios
- food establishments (such as fast food and coffee shops) where people sit to eat/drink, both indoors and on patios (not including takeout, drive-thru or delivery)
- liquor licensed (drinking) establishments (like bars, wineries, distillery tasting rooms, craft taprooms and liquor manufacturers)
- casinos and gaming establishments, both indoors and on patios
- fitness establishments (like gyms and yoga studios) and sport and recreation facilities (like arenas, pools and large multipurpose recreation facilities)
- businesses and organizations offering indoor and outdoor recreation and leisure activities (like climbing facilities, dance classes, escape rooms, go-carts, indoor arcades, indoor play spaces, music lessons, pottery painting, shooting ranges and outdoor adventure)
- indoor and outdoor festivals, special events and arts and culture events and activities (like theatre performances, concerts and movie theatres), unless they are outdoor events held in a public space with no specific entry point (like Nocturne)
- indoor and outdoor sports practices, games, competitions and tournaments (participants and spectators)
- indoor and outdoor extracurricular school-based activities, including sports
- bus, boat and walking tours
- museums, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, and public library programs
- indoor and outdoor events and activities like receptions, social events and conferences that are hosted by a business or organization
- indoor and outdoor wedding ceremonies and funerals (including receptions and visitation) that are hosted by a business or organization
- community meetings in rental spaces and/or where the public may be present, such as annual general meetings of businesses or organizations
- training hosted by a recognized business or organization (such as driver training or courses offered by a training business) and/or using a rental space

What will the policy not apply to?

Proof of full vaccination is not required for most places that don't host formal gatherings and that offer essential, non-discretionary services and activities. Some examples include:

- retail stores



- financial institutions
- professional services like accountants and lawyers
- personal services like hair salons, barber shops, spas, nail salons and body art establishments
- healthcare services and health professions like doctor's offices, dental care, massage therapy and physiotherapy
- rental accommodations like hotel rooms, cottages and campgrounds
- regular faith services (such as daily or weekly)
- pre-primary to Grade 12 school-based activities and field trips that take place during the school day (unless a field trip is for an event or activity where proof of full vaccination is required), before and after school programs and school buses
- post-secondary institutions (universities, NSCC, private career colleges, language schools) unless they are hosting events or activities that the general public attend
- business meetings and other activities in the workplace when they involve people who regularly work together and where the general public is not present (unless it's in a rental space)
- legislatively required meetings where public participation cannot be done virtually (such as municipal council meetings where citizens have a democratic right to participate)
- safety training that is required for a person's job and cannot be done virtually
- places where government services are offered, such as Access Nova Scotia centres
- mental health and addictions support groups
- food banks, shelters, family resource centres and adult day programs for seniors and people with disabilities
- programs and services for vulnerable populations that cannot be offered virtually (except if meals are offered – they can only be provided via takeout or delivery to people who cannot show proof of full vaccination)
- informal gatherings at a private residence (gathering limit of 15 indoors and 50 outdoors)
- general access to public libraries (such as borrowing books, using computers)
- public transportation

Will the proof of vaccination policy apply to employees? What about volunteers?

Proof of full vaccination is not required for full-time or part-time staff of businesses and organizations that host events and activities where participants are required to show their proof. However, if an employee accesses the event or activity on their own time, this protocol applies to them. For example, a staff member at a gym does not need to provide proof of full vaccination to work but does need to provide it to use the facility personally, such as attending fitness classes or using the weight room for their own workout.

Proof of full vaccination is not required if your job requires you to access a business or organization that hosts an event or activity covered by this protocol (such as a liquor inspector, delivery person, public health inspector, police officer, contractor). It is not required for service providers at an event or activity, such as caterers, photographers, DJs and musicians (including those who perform in bars and restaurants), because they are effectively in their workplace.

Proof of full vaccination is required for volunteers who host, lead or organize the events and activities where participants are required to show their proof. Some examples include people who organize community events and programs, lead or organize club type activities, and coaches, referees and other officials who volunteer with sports activities. If they are paid for these activities, proof of full vaccination is not required.



Children and youth who are volunteers for events and activities where participants are required to show their proof of full vaccination have the same grace period to get vaccinated for children and youth who are participants.

Will proof of vaccination be required to visit healthcare or long-term care facilities?

Proof of full vaccination is required for visitors of residents in long-term care facilities or nursing homes under the long-term care directive, not under the provincewide protocol for proof of full vaccination. A date for implementation of this requirement will be determined.

The provincewide protocol does not apply to healthcare facilities operated by the Nova Scotia Health Authority or IWK Health Centre. However, these facilities may put their own vaccine policies in place for visitors.

Will pre-primary to grade 12 students need to show proof of vaccination to attend school? What about extracurricular activities?

Proof of vaccination is not required to attend school, to participate in activities that take place during the school day, to attend before and after school programs, or to take the school bus. However, it is required for extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs etc that take place outside school hours. It is also required for school field trips (including during school hours) to places where proof of vaccination is required, like a recreation facility or a museum.

Will post-secondary students or staff need to show proof of vaccination?

The provincewide proof of vaccination policy does not apply to post-secondary institutions (universities, NSCC, private career colleges, language schools) unless they are hosting events or activities that the general public attend (such as spaces they rent for events, a performance in a campus theatre or fitness facilities that the public can use). However, many post-secondary institutions are setting their own vaccine policies.

Do you need to be fully vaccinated to play on a sports team? What about school sports? What about spectators?

Everyone who is 12 and older needs to show proof of full vaccination to participate in indoor and outdoor sporting events, including practices, games, competitions, tournaments. This includes school sports that take place outside school hours. It includes spectators. It includes participants as well as teachers, coaches, officials and others when they are acting in a volunteer capacity but does not apply when people are paid to support these activities.

Will there be a grace-period for children who just turned 12 or will soon turn 12?

Children who turned 12 between Jan. 1 and Oct. 4 this year have until Dec. 31 to attend events and activities covered by the [protocol](#) while they get vaccinated. Children who turn 12 after Oct. 4 have three months from their birthday. If they choose not to get vaccinated, they will no longer be able to participate in these events and activities once the grace period is up. They can resume if they are able to show proof of full vaccination.

Will there be a grace period for children 13 and older?

Children and youth age 13 to 18 who can provide proof that they received one dose of vaccine can start participating in sport, recreation, arts and culture programming (but not any other events or activities



covered by the [protocol](#)). To continue participating, they must provide proof of full vaccination by November 9 (second dose plus 14 days for it to take effect). In other words, they must get a first dose no later than September 28 and a second dose no later than October 26. If they choose not to get vaccinated, they will no longer be able to participate in these events and activities once the grace period is up. They can resume if they are able to show proof of full vaccination.

If parents are not fully vaccinated, can children still participate in events and activities?

If children are under 11, if they meet the grace period criteria or if they are fully vaccinated, they can participate in events and activities where the proof of vaccination policy applies. Parents who are not fully vaccinated would have to either drop off their children for these activities (if that is possible) or have a fully vaccinated adult accompany them.

What kind of events will require proof of full vaccination?

People need to show full proof of vaccination to attend indoor and outdoor events that are hosted by a recognized business or organization. That includes hotels, restaurants and other rental facilities that host events. It includes festivals, special events like a community fundraiser or dinner, and social events like parties and receptions. It includes organized sports events. It includes arts and culture events and venues like theatre performances, concerts and movie theatres. It includes weddings, funerals, visitation and associated receptions.

The gathering limits of 25 people indoors and 50 outdoors remain in effect for informal gatherings. Proof of vaccination is not required for informal gatherings or events when there is no recognized business or organization involved, such as a dinner party or a backyard wedding with no wedding planner, caterer or other service providers. Often, informal gatherings are held at your home. A community room in a condo or apartment building is considered to be an extension of your home.

Is proof of full vaccination required if an event is hosted by a recognized business or organization but follows informal gathering limits?

If a recognized business or organization is hosting the event, then it is not an informal gathering. No matter how many or few people are attending, proof of full vaccination is required.

What happens if an event is in a public place with no specific entry point?

Events held in public spaces with no specific entry point are not subject to the proof of vaccination policy. For example, there is no entry point to the Nocturne festival where people need to wander the streets to see the exhibits. However, when an event brings people into a single public space, such as the Halifax commons, with the intention of them staying in that space for the activity, a specific entry point can and should be set up and proof of vaccination is required.

Why isn't proof of full vaccination required for faith services?

Regular faith services (such as daily or weekly) are an essential activity for many people so we are not requiring proof of vaccination to participate in them. We do strongly recommend everyone get vaccinated and encourage everyone to continue wearing masks at faith services even when the mask requirement is lifted.

If a wedding is held in a church, does that make it a faith service where full proof of vaccination is not required?



Even if a wedding is held in a church, proof of full vaccination is required. This is because a wedding brings together a variety of different people which increases the risk, whereas faith services typically gather more or less the same people on a regular basis.

If an event is held in a church hall, does that mean proof of vaccination is not required?

Proof of vaccination is not required for a regular faith service, but it is required for any events and activities hosted by the church, including social time after a service, bible study, youth group, community meals or fundraisers. It is also required when people rent/use the church's facilities (like a hall or other rooms) for events like a wedding reception or leisure activities/clubs like playing cards.

What kinds of leisure activities require proof of full vaccination?

There is a wide range of activities in the leisure category. Some examples include climbing facilities, escape rooms, pottery painting, indoor play places, arcades, shooting ranges, golf courses or putting ranges, go-carts, dart and card clubs, karaoke clubs and events, outdoor adventure businesses and more.

Is proof of full vaccination required for dog training lessons or dog day cares?

Proof of full vaccination is not required if you are dropping off/picking up a pet but it is required to participate in lessons. They are considered a leisure activity.

Is proof of full vaccination required in condo or apartment gyms and pools?

Proof of vaccination is not required in condo or apartment gyms and pools unless one of these locations has their own policy requiring it.

Is proof of full vaccination required for hotel pools, gyms, bars and restaurants?

Proof of full vaccination is required for both guests and members of the public who wish to use hotel pools, gyms, bars and restaurants. A hotel can provide room service to guests who are not fully vaccinated. Guests can also get takeout and delivery from other food establishments.

Can people enter bars or restaurants to order their takeout food without providing proof of full vaccination?

People can enter a food establishment to order their takeout meal without providing proof of full vaccination. They only need to provide proof if they are dining in.

Why isn't proof of full vaccination required for personal services?

Generally, the proof of full vaccination policy applies to places that facilitate gatherings. Hair salons, barber shops and other personal services are not places where people gather for social reasons.

Is proof of vaccination required for farmer's markets? What about craft markets?

Farmer's markets are considered retail spaces. The proof of vaccination protocol does not apply to retail spaces. However, craft markets are considered special events where proof of full vaccination is required for participants (not for people working at the event).

Is proof of full vaccination required for members of a co-op given that they are all effectively owners?

Anyone who is participating in an event or activity covered by the protocol (rather than hosting, organizing or leading it) must provide proof of full vaccination. This is essentially same as a person who



works at a gym – they do not need to provide proof to do their job but they do need to provide it to use the facility for their own personal use.

Is proof of vaccination required to access training?

Proof of full vaccination is required for people taking training hosted by a recognized business or organization (such as driver training or courses offered by a training business) or using a rental space.

This does not include post-secondary institutions (universities, NSSC or private career colleges) although they may have their own vaccine policies. It does not apply to the road test for a driver’s license because that is a government service. It does not include safety training that is required for a person’s job and cannot be done virtually.

If an employer brings together its employees for training, proof of vaccination is not required. If the employer brings a trainer into the workplace to train their own employees, the trainer does not have to show proof of vaccination unless the workplace has a policy requiring it.

Is proof of vaccination required for meetings?

Proof of vaccination isn’t required for business meetings and activities in the workplace when they involve people who regularly work together and where the general public is not present (unless they’re held in a rental space).

Proof of vaccination is required for community meetings that bring different people together or are open to the general public, such as annual general meetings or meetings of an association, society, club, co-op etc.

Is proof of vaccination required for meetings where the public has a right to participate?

Proof of vaccination is not required for legislatively required meetings where public participation cannot be done virtually, such as municipal council meetings or government consultations where citizens have a democratic right to participate. These kinds of meetings can be held virtually as long as that doesn’t interfere with a person’s right to participate.

What are government services that do not require proof of full vaccination?

Proof of full vaccination is not required for people who are accessing frontline government services where government employees serve the public. Examples include Access Nova Scotia centres, municipal or provincial department offices where people are served in person, and provincial services like driving tests.

This exception does not extend to businesses and organizations that have government grants or funding. If they are hosting events and activities covered by the [protocol](#), they must ensure participants show proof of full vaccination.

Is proof of full vaccination required for events and activities in First Nations communities?

When events and activities covered by the [protocol](#) are held in First Nations communities, proof of full vaccination is required.



Can I ask service providers if they have been vaccinated?

You can ask someone if they have been vaccinated but they do not have to disclose their personal health information to you if they are not seeking to access an event or activity covered by the [protocol](#).

Can a business or organization have a vaccine policy that is stricter than the provincewide policy?

A business or organization could choose to set a vaccine policy that is stricter than the provincewide policy. However, we've designed the provincewide protocol to balance safety with some reasonable exceptions. Any policies should take legal and ethical implications into consideration. People who are not fully vaccinated need to be able to access essential services.

Can I use a COVID test or anti-body test in place of proof of vaccination? What about masks, physical distancing or gathering limits?

Testing, masks, physical distancing, gathering limits and other public health measures can be used to mitigate risk but they cannot be used in place of proof of full vaccination.

CHECKING PROOF OF FULL VACCINATION

Who is responsible to check proof of vaccination?

Some businesses and organizations that host events and activities covered under Section 3.1 of this protocol rent or use space within a building. In these cases, there is a joint responsibility between the business or organization and the building owner/manager. The building owner/manager needs to ensure renters and users of their spaces have proper processes in place for checking proof of full vaccination for participants in these events and activities. They can accomplish this through their rental agreement.

In cases where the renter or user of the owner/manager is not willing or capable of implementing a proper process for checking participants' proof of full vaccination, the owner/manager will be held responsible if there is demonstrated non-compliance with this protocol. If the owner/manager does not wish to take on the responsibility, they should not rent the space or make it available for the event or activity. The owner/manager cannot have the renter or user of the space sign a waiver absolving them of the responsibility.

If a business or organization that does not host events and activities covered under Section 3.1 of this protocol rents or uses a space in a building, they continue to be exempt from requiring proof of vaccination, even if events or activities in other parts of the building require it.

How do businesses and organizations know what is valid proof of full vaccination? How does a member of the public know exactly what they need to provide?

The [proof of full vaccination protocol](#) outlines what fully vaccinated means and what information is required on records to prove full vaccination. There is also a [guide for businesses and organizations](#) that gives step by step instructions and a [guide for the public](#) on what to expect when going places where proof of full vaccination is required.

Do businesses need special equipment to scan a QR code with VaxCheckNS?

Starting October 22, Nova Scotia will implement VaxCheckNS, a unique QR code scanner app that businesses and organizations use on a smartphone or other device (like a tablet) to scan a paper or



digital version of person's proof of vaccination. VaxCheckNS will be available as free download in the App Store for Apple devices and Google Play for other devices. No special equipment is required.

Do people need to have a QR code on their proof of vaccination?

Nova Scotia has adopted the Canadian format as our new standard format for the Nova Scotia COVID-19 Proof of Vaccination. It has a QR code that can be scanned. Old formats will continue to be accepted.

The benefit of the new format is that once the VaxCheckNS app is available in mid-October, businesses and organizations can use it to scan this standard form of proof and the app will give a green "confirmed" or red "sorry" response. This will make the process of showing proof easier for everyone.

Further, people from other jurisdictions will have proof of vaccination in many different formats, with and without QR codes. They are acceptable as long as they show:

- the person's name
- the brand(s) of vaccine received (such as Moderna, Pfizer, etc)
- an indication that all required doses for that brand of vaccine were received
- the date when the final dose was received

It's important to note that VaxCheckNS will only give a green/red response for the Canadian or Nova Scotian standard format. When used with other proof that has a QR code, it will give all the details on the proof of vaccination record.

CONSENT TO KEEP RECORD OF VACCINATION STATUS

Can a business or organization keep a record of my vaccination status?

A business or organization needs to get your consent to keep a record of the fact that you showed them your proof of full vaccination. It is best that consent be given in writing. We've provided a standard consent form that you can use (see [appendix B](#)).

If you give consent, you might not need to show your proof every time you go to the business or organization because they can just refer to their records.

If you do not give consent, they cannot keep any record about your vaccination status. Unless they have a method of keeping track that does not record or identify your vaccination status, you will need to show your proof every time.

Can a business or organization keep a copy of my proof of vaccination?

Businesses and organizations should not collect or keep a copy of your proof of vaccination itself – just a record of the fact that you showed it (if you consent to that). They should destroy any records if you revoke your consent or when the proof of full vaccination requirement is no longer in effect.

Can children 12 and older consent to the business or organization keeping a record of their vaccination status?

It would be best for parents to consent on behalf of their child to having the child's vaccine status recorded but the child can consent on their own as long as they understand what they are consenting to.



EXCEPTIONS

Will there be exceptions for religious or cultural reasons for not getting vaccinated?

Exceptions will not be granted for religious or cultural reasons.

What does this mean for people who cannot be vaccinated?

The proof of full vaccination policy allows for medical exception to vaccination. There are very few medical reasons someone would be granted an exception. They will only be granted in the following circumstances:

- a history of severe allergic reaction (e.g. anaphylaxis) after previous administration of a COVID-19 vaccine using a similar platform (mRNA or viral vector)
- an allergy to any component of the specific COVID-19 vaccine or its container (polyethylene glycol for the Pfizer-BioNTech and the Moderna vaccines)
- a history of major venous and/or arterial thrombosis with thrombocytopenia following vaccination with the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine
- a history of capillary leak syndrome following vaccination with the AstraZeneca vaccine
- a history of myocarditis and/or pericarditis after a first dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna)
- experienced a serious adverse event after receiving a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. A serious adverse event is defined as life-threatening, requires in-patient hospitalization or prolongs an existing hospitalization, results in persistent or significant disability/incapacity, or in a congenital anomaly/birth defect.

Immunosuppression, auto-immune disorders, pregnancy and breastfeeding are not medical reasons that prevent people from getting COVID-19 vaccine.

As a precaution, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends that people who experienced myocarditis and/or pericarditis after a first dose of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) should wait to get their second dose of mRNA vaccine until more information is available.

How do I get a medical exception? Can I go to the hospital to get it?

A medical exception can only be granted by your nurse practitioner or family doctor if they determine that you qualify based on a very limited and specific list of criteria. Please contact your nurse practitioner or doctor if you may qualify for a medical exception. Do not go to a hospital or emergency department to request a medical exception, you will not be provided one.

I don't have a nurse practitioner or family doctor. How do I request a medical exception?

Nova Scotians who do not have a nurse practitioner or family doctor and may qualify for a medical exception can call 811. You will be referred to a nurse practitioner or family doctor who will determine if you qualify for a medical exception.

I called 811 and they told me I don't qualify for referral. How do I get this decision reviewed?

Nova Scotians who may qualify for a medical exception to COVID-19 vaccination and do not have a nurse practitioner or family doctor can call 811 for referral, if they meet the very specific and limited criteria. If 811 determines the patient does not qualify for a medical exception based on the information provide



and the criteria in place, a referral cannot be issued. More information about the exceptions process and who qualifies is available [online](#).

How long will take to receive my medical exception through the 811 process?

If you do not have a nurse practitioner or family doctor and need to go through 811 for a medical exception to vaccination, it can take up to 10 business days.

I went to my doctor and was told I don't qualify. I think I do. What do I do now?

Medical exceptions can only be provided by a nurse practitioner or family doctor after assessment or review of your personal medical history. If your nurse practitioner or doctor determines you do not qualify, you will need to speak with them about their decision.

I have a medical reason to be exempt from vaccination which is not part of the list. How do I receive one? Who do I need to speak with?

There are only six reasons why someone qualifies for a medical exception to COVID-19 vaccination. An exception will not be provided for any other medical diagnoses.

Will exception letters from outside Nova Scotia be accepted?

We are not able to accept exception letters from outside Nova Scotia because we have no way of verifying that they are valid.

PROOF OF VACCINATION RECORDS

How do I get my proof of vaccination?

Anyone who got a dose of COVID-19 vaccine in Nova Scotia can access their proof of vaccination online at novascotia.ca/immunizationrecord or by calling toll-free: 1-833-797-7772. Effective October 1, you will get your proof of vaccination in the new standard format. Old formats will continue to be accepted, but the new format is preferred.

My immunization record has an error/missing information. How do I get this fixed?

If your vaccine receipt has an error, is missing information or you can't access the receipt online using your Canadian health card number and the email address or phone number you used to book your appointment, call 1-833-797-7772 (Monday to Friday, 7am to 7pm) to report an issue with your vaccine receipt.

When calling to report an issue with your vaccine receipt, you may need to provide your:

- Name
- date of birth
- email address or phone number you used to book your appointment
- health card number
- type, date and location of COVID-19 vaccine you received (for each dose)

After you report an issue, it should take 2 weeks to get a new digital copy of your vaccine receipt (email is sent from noreply@canimmunize.ca). It can take longer if more information is needed.



I only received one dose in Nova Scotia. How do I get it added to my Nova Scotia COVID-19 immunization record?

At this time, we are unable to add out-of-province doses to the Nova Scotia COVID-19 immunization record. However, we are working on a solution for Nova Scotia residents and it will be publicly communicated when ready. Until then, anyone in Nova Scotia who is 12 and older and has received one or more doses outside the province will need to show the proof of vaccination from the jurisdiction they were vaccinated in.

COMPLIANCE

Is the proof of full vaccination requirement legal?

The proof of full vaccination requirement, like all public health orders, is based on the best public health evidence and advice available. There is no doubt about the need for vaccination. There is no doubt about the usefulness of the vaccines which have been approved in Canada in saving lives. Based on the evidence, we are confident that the proof of vaccination requirement is valid, necessary and lawful, and will help to put this fourth wave behind us.

Can a business or organization be fined for not checking proof of full vaccination?

Adherence to public health orders is required by law. If your establishment, event or activity is covered by the [protocol](#), you must refuse attendance to those who do not show proof of full vaccination or a valid exception letter. It is an offence to disobey a public health order. For corporations and organizations, the fine is a minimum of \$7,500 for each separate offence.

Can a person be fined for showing false proof of full vaccination?

People who wish to access events and activities covered by the protocol are required by law to show their proof of full vaccination. It is an offence to knowingly provide false or misleading information, either orally or in writing, under the Nova Scotia Health Protection Act which could result in a fine of \$2,422.50 per occurrence.

Will there be inspections of businesses and organizations to make sure they are checking for proof of full vaccination?

Provincial inspectors will conduct compliance checks at events and activities where proof of full vaccination is required. Some may be coupled with regular inspections, such as food safety. Some may be based on complaints. Not every event and activity will be inspected.

Inspectors will ensure the business or organization has a system in place to only allow people who are either age 11 or under or have provided proof of full vaccination to participate. They will also check for compliance with other aspects of the Health Protection Act Order that may apply.

Any compliance action will take into consideration the risk to public health and the willingness of the business or organization to comply with this protocol. If aspects of non-compliance are noted, enforcement will take a measured approach with the use of a range of available options to ensure compliance with this protocol (e.g. education, ticketing, etc.).

What can a business do if a patron is causing a disturbance?



[Skills Online NS](#) offers free online training course that may help businesses and organizations manage challenging situations with patrons. A recommended bundle of courses includes:

- Working in a Challenging Time
- Specialities: Customer Service
- Bullying and Violence in the Workplace

If necessary, businesses and organizations can call their local police should they need assistance (i.e. to help manage people who are causing disturbances).