

Omicron Disease Severity and Mitigation of Restrictions in Newfoundland and Labrador and the Other Canadian Provinces

Objective

To monitor COVID-19 events in Canada (CA) after the Omicron outbreak.

Practice Points

1. The Omicron variant was first reported in CA on 28 Nov 2021. By mid-Dec 2021, all provinces had reported having cases with the Omicron variant.
2. The Omicron variant was first reported in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL), on 15 Dec 2021.
3. Compared to other variants, Omicron is more transmissible and better able to evade immunity than previous variants.

Results

Table 1. End of COVID-19 Restrictions in Canadian Provinces

Province	Date Omicron First Reported	No VaxPass	No Capacity Limits	No Masking ¹	No Isolation for Cases
NL	15 Dec	14 Mar	14 Mar	14 Mar	TBD
PE	14 Dec	28 Feb	6 Apr	6 May	TBD
NS	13 Dec	28 Feb	21 Mar	21 Mar	6 Jul ²
NB	13 Dec	28 Feb	14 Mar	14 Mar	14 Mar ²
QC	29 Nov	12 Mar	12 Mar	14 May	TBD
ON	28 Nov	14 Mar	14 Mar	21 Mar	31 Aug
MB	7 Dec	1 Mar	15 Mar	15 Mar	15 Mar
SK	8 Dec	14 Feb	Lifted Previously	28 Feb	28 Feb
AB	30 Nov	9 Feb	1 Mar	1 Mar	15 Jun
BC	30 Nov	8 Apr	17 Feb ³	11 Mar	TBD

¹ Many provinces still require masks in high-risk settings & are strongly recommended in all public settings.

² 5-day isolation still required for those in vulnerable sectors.

³ Capacity limits for long-term care (LTC), assisted living facilities and worship services removed 18 March.

- NL was the only province to lift all restrictions, including capacity limits, masking, and proof of vaccination requirements, on the same day.

Methods

1. Data on hospital occupancy due to COVID-19 was obtained from provincial websites from 01 Dec 2021 to 31 Aug 2022.
2. Information regarding mitigation of restrictions was obtained from provincial websites and government news releases.

Table 2. End of COVID-19 Masking Restrictions in Canadian Provinces

Province	Stores, Restaurants, Etc.	Schools	Public Transportation	Other High-Risk Settings (Such as Health Care)
NL	14 Mar	24 May	14 Mar	TBD
PE	6 May	23 May	3 Jun	TBD
NS	21 Mar	24 May	21 Mar	TBD
NB	14 Mar	14 Mar	14 Mar	TBD
QC	14 May	7 Mar ¹ ; 14 May ²	18 Jun	TBD
ON	21 Mar	21 Mar	11 Jun	11 Jun ³
MB	15 Mar	15 Mar	15 Mar	TBD
SK	28 Feb	1 Mar	28 Feb	TBD
AB	1 Mar	1 Mar	TBD	15 Jun ⁴
BC	11 Mar	~28 Mar	11 Mar	TBD

¹ No longer required while sitting in class but mask mandate still applies in common areas of elementary and high schools, while students are circulating and on school buses.

² Masks no longer required in common areas or on school buses.

³ No longer required at hospitals & other health care spaces (however a number of major hospitals to keep their mandatory masking policy) but still required in LTC homes and retirement homes.

⁴ Mandatory masking rules at Alberta Health Services and other health care facilities determined by individual sites.

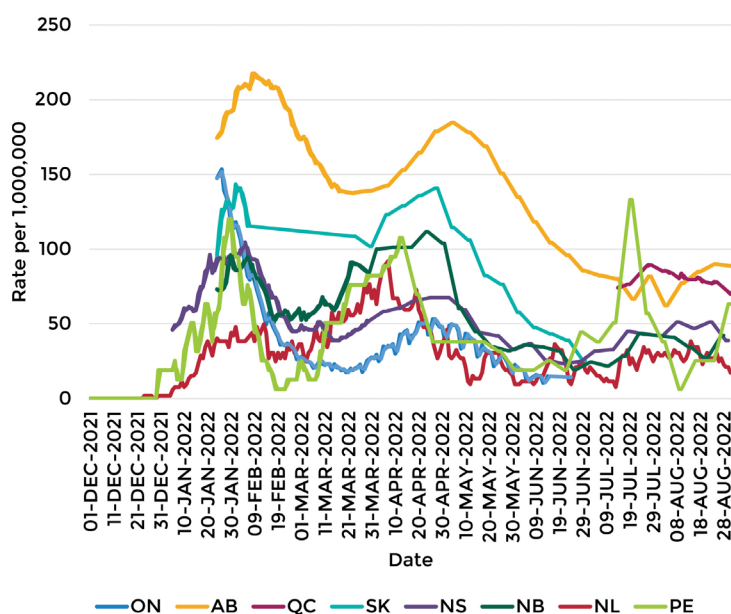


Figure 1. Hospitalizations Due to COVID-19 in Canadian Provinces (Rate Per 1,000,000 Population), Dec 2021 – Aug 2022

- Data not available for MB and BC; QC data only available as of Jul 2022.
- Hospitalizations peaked in late Jan 2022 and rebounded a few weeks after end of restrictions in Mar 2022, but this ameliorated quickly.

Conclusions

1. Some provinces lifted restrictions earlier than NL even though hospitalization rates were higher.
2. High immunization rates in NL likely prevented the higher rate of hospitalization seen in other provinces.