

Holiday restrictions

Why don't we have the same restrictions across the whole province?

Most of the added restrictions for the holiday period of December 21 up to and including January 10 are provincewide. The only ones specific to areas of HRM and Hants County are casinos remaining closed and restaurants and bars remaining closed for dine-in service. These restrictions are meant to help prevent the virus from transmitting through social activities over the holidays.

If cases are mostly in Halifax, why are restrictions being applied across the whole province?

Case numbers have decreased in Halifax and increased in other parts of the province. Restrictions that limit people's interactions provincewide during the holiday season will help prevent the virus from spreading.

When do the new holiday restrictions take effect?

The new holiday restrictions (which are mostly provincewide) are in place from 12:00 a.m. on December 21 to 11:59 p.m. on January 10. We will evaluate early in January and any changes will be announced publicly.

What are the boundaries for HRM and Hants County restrictions?

There is a [list of communities on the website](#) where the additional restrictions apply.

What are the restrictions for areas of HRM and Hants county?

- The closure of restaurants and licensed establishments for dine-in service in these areas is extended until 11:59 p.m. on Jan. 10. They can continue to offer takeout, delivery and drive-thru service.
- The Halifax casino will also remain closed until 11:59 p.m. on Jan. 10

What are the provincewide restrictions?

Effective 12:01 a.m. on Dec. 21 to 11:59 p.m. on Jan. 10, the following restrictions are in place provincewide:

For gatherings and events:

- gatherings in your home can have 10 people total, including the people who live there
- people can have a close social group of 10 without physical distancing
- social events, festivals, special events, arts/cultural events and sports events are not permitted
- faith gatherings, wedding ceremonies and funeral services can have a maximum of 150 people outdoors or 50 per cent of an indoor venue's capacity, to a maximum of 100
- wedding and funeral receptions are not permitted

For businesses:

- restaurants and licensed establishments, outside the areas of HRM and Hants County noted above, must stop service by 10 p.m. and close by 11 p.m.
- fitness and sport and recreation facilities can open
- fitness facilities like gyms and yoga studios can operate at 50 per cent capacity and must ensure three metres distance between participants during high intensity activities
- outdoor fitness classes can operate at full capacity and must ensure three metres distance between participants during high intensity activities

- personal services such as hair salons and spas can resume providing services that can only be done if the customer removes their mask, such as facials
- retail and shopping mall rules currently in place for areas of HRM and Hants County will extend to the entire province, including operating at 25 per cent of their capacity; their food courts can remain open with public health measures in place including physical distance between tables

For sports, museums, libraries and long-term care:

- sports practices, training and arts and culture rehearsals are limited to 25 participants without physical distancing but games, tournaments and performances are not permitted
- the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, museums and libraries can reopen at full capacity with physical distancing and other public health measures in place
- each long-term care resident can have two designated caregivers and facilities can allow a limited number of visitors

TRAVEL

Are there travel restrictions within Nova Scotia?

We continue to discourage travel in general. It is best to stay close to home. Effective December 21, we're no longer specifically asking people to avoid travel into and out of the areas of Halifax and Hants County. But we are asking all Nova Scotians to avoid unnecessary travel in general.

Can people travel within the provinces for work purposes?

Yes. If work can be done virtually, that is best, but people can travel for work if they need to.

If you travel within the province, do you have to self-isolate?

No. Self-isolation is required if you enter Nova Scotia from outside Atlantic Canada. For Nova Scotians, it is not required when you return from another Atlantic province or when you travel within Nova Scotia.

GATHERINGS

How many people can you have in your home?

Across the province starting December 21, you can have 10 people total in your home without physical distancing. If more than 10 people live in your home, that is fine.

What if some of the people are small children or babies, do they count in the total of 10?

Yes. It doesn't matter how old people are, the limit is 10 people at a gathering in your home, including the people who live there.

Can households with 10 or more people have any visitors?

The limit is 10 people. We realize this means that some families may not be able to have many – or any – visitors. However, this restriction is important for their safety and for the safety of others in the community.

Can your entire household go out together?

When your household goes out into the community, no matter how many people there are, you can stay together without physical distance. But whole families should not go into stores together if you can

avoid it. Ideally, just one person from your household should go into a store. This helps avoid physical distancing challenges for other customers and staff.

Can groups of 10 still get together?

Across the province, you can have a close social group of up to 10 people without physical distancing. This group is typically the people you live with, and maybe a few more. You should try to keep this group consistent and avoid belonging to multiple groups.

This group is for social purposes – it is not for workplaces. If you’re doing things like skating at your local rink, having a meal at a restaurant, walking in a park, or attending a faith gathering, you can go with this group without physical distancing.

A random group of 10 people should not form spontaneously. Businesses or organizations should not seat 10 random people together.

Can a group of 10 kids get together to play?

If your kids are playing with friends, they should be friends who you’ve chosen to be in your family’s close social group. You should keep this group consistent and try not to belong to multiple groups. So you need to think carefully about who to have in your group. A random group of kids should not get together to play.

Can there still be gatherings of 50?

No. Across the province, we are eliminating the general gathering limit of 50 for now. At this time, that is too many people to have together without a recognized business or organization overseeing the event and making sure public health measures are followed.

Are any community events allowed right now?

For this three-week period across the province, we are not permitting any social events, festivals and special events, arts/cultural events, or sports events.

Businesses have planned holiday events based on 50% of capacity to a maximum of 200 people indoors. If they scale back, can they still have these events?

No, special events like this cannot happen from December 21 to at least 11:59 p.m. on January 10. This will help prevent the virus from spreading through social activities.

Can there be church services or other faith gatherings?

Yes. Starting December 21, faith gatherings can happen with a maximum of 150 people outdoors or 50% of an indoor venue’s capacity to a maximum of 100. Physical distancing is required unless you are with members of your own household or close social group of up to 10.

Churches have planned their Christmas services based on a larger gathering limit, some have even required reservations. Do they have to cut their numbers in half?

Faith-based organizations must scale back all services to meet the current limit.

Are weddings and funerals allowed right now?

Starting December 21, we are allowing wedding ceremonies and funeral services that are hosted by a recognized business or organization. There can be a maximum of 150 people outdoors or 50% of an

indoor venue's capacity to a maximum of 100. Physical distancing is required unless you are with members of your own household or close social group of up to 10.

While there can be wedding ceremonies and funeral services, there can be no receptions or visitation associated with them. For this three-week period, we are considering wedding receptions and funeral receptions/visitation to be special events which are not allowed.

I was planning my own wedding with the gathering limit of 50. What am I supposed to do now?

For the ceremony, you could engage a recognized business or organization to host it or you could reduce the size to 10 people in your home (including the officiant). There can be no reception, unless it's in your home with a total of 10 people. Another option is to postpone the wedding.

What should I do if there's a large gathering or other rules being broken?

If you have a concern about a particular instance of public health measures not being followed, you can call your local non-emergency police number.

Where can I find more information about safe gatherings during the holiday season?

Please see our [holiday guidance](#) for information about safe holidays during the pandemic.

BUSINESSES

Are bars, restaurants and casinos allowed to open?

Restaurants and licensed establishments will also remain closed for dine-in service in areas of Halifax and Hants County until at least 11:59 p.m. on January 10. They can continue to offer takeout and delivery. Casinos in Halifax will remain closed for the same time period.

Around the rest of the province, restaurants and bars will operate with reduced hours starting December 21. They must stop service by 10 a.m. and close by 11 p.m.

This isn't a reflection of how safe bars and restaurants are. It is simply to reduce the opportunity for prolonged social gatherings in close proximity without masks.

Can restaurants offer takeout, delivery and drive thru service after 11 p.m.?

Yes, there is no restriction on when takeout, delivery or drive thru service ends.

Can fitness and recreation facilities operate again?

Starting December 21, fitness and sport and recreation facilities in areas of HRM and Hants County can reopen.

Across the province, fitness facilities like gyms and yoga studios can operate at 50% capacity. Outdoor fitness classes can operate at full capacity. Indoors and outdoors, there must be 3 metres distance between participants during high intensity activities, as per the fitness sector's revised its re-opening plan: [https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/prevention-plans/COVID-19 Fitness Industry Guidance Dec 14 2020.pdf](https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/prevention-plans/COVID-19_Fitness_Industry_Guidance_Dec_14_2020.pdf)

Do the fitness facility rules apply to sport and recreation facilities like rinks, arenas, gymnasiums, golf courses, etc?

Generally, no. However, if the sport and recreation facility has a weight room, a cardio machine area or fitness classes, then the fitness facility rules apply in those areas – 50% capacity and 3 metres between people for high intensity activities.

Can people get facials and other services that require removing your mask?

Yes, as of December 21, personal services businesses such as hair salons and spas can resume providing services that can only be done if the customer removes their mask, such as a facial.

Can movie theatres open?

No, movies are considered arts and culture events.

Are there new restrictions for stores?

Across the province, retail businesses can operate at 25% of their capacity starting December 21. This will help avoid crowds forming during a period when there is traditionally a lot of shopping.

Other retail rules that have been in place in areas of Halifax and Hants County are now extended to the rest of the province:

- Ensure customers and staff can maintain physical distance (2 metres/6 feet apart)
- Customers must maintain physical distance and wear non-medical masks when lined up to enter a retail business – both indoors and outdoors
- The business cannot play music louder than 50 decibels so that normal conversation is possible

What's the definition of a retail business?

A retail business is one that engages in the retail sale or rental of items to the public on ongoing basis at a fixed location.

How many people can be in a retail store?

The number of people who can be in a retail store depends on how much space you have. For this period of time, retail stores cannot have more than 25% of their maximum occupancy on the premises at a time. That includes both staff and customers. They must also ensure physical distancing is maintained.

If I have reached 25% of my store's maximum occupancy, there isn't enough room for everyone to stay 2 metres/6 feet apart. What should I do?

In this case, you set a lower limit on the number of people who are on the premises at a time to ensure physical distancing.

How do I know what my retail store's maximum occupancy is?

Every business should already be aware of its maximum occupancy under the building code. If you don't know your occupant load, you can calculate a safe number of occupants using 160 square feet per person. As an example, a retail space that is 4800 square feet can accommodate 30 people. A larger retail space of 12 000 square feet can accommodate 75 people. These numbers would still be dependant on there being enough room to ensure physical distancing.

Are there rules for shopping malls?

The rules for shopping malls are also extended across the province starting December 21. In addition to the retail rules outlined above, the following is also required for malls:

- No more than 10 people at a time can line up at a retail business inside the mall and they must maintain physical distance
- People are not permitted to loiter in any area of the mall
- Directional markings are provided to manage the flow of people within the mall Furniture in common areas of the mall is removed or inaccessible
- Non-retail public areas in the mall must be closed, other than public washrooms and hallways that give access to stores
- The mall cannot play music louder than 50 decibels so that normal conversation is possible
- Food court vendors can open with public health measures in place including 2 metre/6 feet between tables

Why are food courts open when restaurants in areas of Halifax and Hants County are closed?

For people who are underhoused or homeless, often the only warm places they have during the winter months are public places like malls. That's why food courts will reopen or remain open, while following all the public health measures.

Do farm farmers markets and flea markets have to close?

Farmers markets and flea markets are considered retail operations if they have regular hours every day or week, the majority of their vendors are always the same, and the market serves as their retail outlet. Market operators need to ensure physical distancing and can only have 25% of the maximum occupancy, including vendors and customers. They need a COVID-19 prevention plan.

If the market is not a regular daily or weekly operation, they are considered special events that cannot happen until after January 10.

Can holiday craft shows and markets still happen?

No, they are considered special events that cannot happen at this time.

Does the limit of 10 apply to day cares, day camps or before and after school programs?

No, the limit of 15 without physical distancing remains in place for these settings.

What's the limit for a business meeting or training?

At this time, no more than 25 people can gather for a meeting or training, with physical distancing and regardless of room capacity.

What should I do if rules aren't being followed at a business?

If you have concerns about how a business is operating, you could speak with the manager. If you feel it's necessary, you could contact the Safety Division at the Department of Labour and Advanced Education at 1-800-952-2687 or LAESafetybranch@novascotia.ca.

ACTIVITIES

Are there any restrictions for sports? What about arts and culture rehearsals?

We are setting a standard limit around the province for the number of participants in sports practices and training and arts and culture rehearsals. Starting December 21, there can be no more than 25.

This will be for practices, training and rehearsals only. There will be no games, tournaments or performances. Physical distancing is not required because we recognize that some intermittent contact is necessary for these activities.

Can there be spectators for sports practices and training and arts and culture rehearsals?

There can be no spectators at this time.

Can people travel around the province for sports activities?

We are no longer restricting travel for sports, but we still strongly recommend that people do not travel if they don't need to.

Can there be any sports at schools during this period?

Schools will be closed for an extended holiday break. If there are any practices or training from December 21 up to and including January 10, they must follow the restrictions for sports. The Nova Scotia School Athletics Federation has decided that no sports activities will take place in schools, however, some training or practices may take place in other facilities.

How many cases have been transmitted through sports teams in Nova Scotia? If it's only been a few, why are you restricting sports provincewide?

There have been a number of cases in Nova Scotia that have involved sports teams. The current issue, however, is the potential for the virus to spread through social activities during the holidays. The fewer interactions people have through social and other activities, the less chance there is of the virus transmitting during this period.

Can museums and libraries reopen?

Yes. Starting December 21, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, museums and libraries in the areas of Halifax and Hants County can reopen at full capacity while ensuring people can maintain physical distance and follow other public health measures.

Can after school programs still happen? What's considered an after school program?

After school programs offer care for children from Primary to Grade 6, five days a week for the entire school year. See more in the [Before and After School Programs Guidelines](#). These restrictions don't close after school programs specifically, but public schools will be closed for an extended holiday during this period.

Can there be Scouts and Brownies meetings? What about Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous?

Gatherings like these are subject to the gathering limit of 10 with physical distancing. In some cases, it may be possible to postpone until after the 3-week period of holiday restrictions. In other cases, it's important to proceed with a limit of 10.

Can businesses like indoor playgrounds, bowling alleys, shooting ranges, golf courses, putting ranges, go-carts, climbing gyms, trampoline facilities, and escape rooms open? What about music and dance lessons?

Recreation and leisure businesses can operate and must follow public health measures such as physical distancing and masks.

Can people get together to play darts, cards, pool and bingo?

People can gather for these activities if they are hosted by a licensed establishment. The licensed establishment takes on responsibility for ensuring that public health measures are followed and that these activities take place following specific guidance established for them.

Can people get together for singing Christmas carols?

We continue to recommend against singing because it is considered a high-risk activity, even with a mask. If you decide to gather to sing Christmas carols just the same, the gathering limit is 10, there should be physical distancing, and it would be better to do it outside.

Can a long-term care resident go to their family's home for a visit? Can family visit a resident in their facility?

To protect our most vulnerable, we cannot allow residents of long-term care facilities to visit their families' homes. However, residents can leave their facilities for medical/dental appointments or to go for a drive with 1 designated caregiver (with no other passengers, no stops or drive-thru). Starting December 21, each resident can have 2 designated caregivers and facilities can allow a limited number of visitors. Please contact the facility for more information.

The same is true for adult residential centres (ARC) and regional rehabilitation centres (RRC) licensed by the Department of Community Services.

Can adult day programs operate?

No, for this three-week period, community-based adult day programs cannot operate around the province, unless they provide respite care.

These programs are different from general recreation programs for seniors. Adult day programs offer activities in a professional care setting for older adults who require supervised care during the day, or for those who are isolated and lonely. They enable seniors to socialize and enjoy planned activities in a group setting, while still receiving needed health services. At the same time, they offer family caregivers respite from caregiving duties while knowing that their loved one are in a safe place.