

## Information about new variant of concern – Omicron

A new SARS-CoV-2 variant of concern, Omicron, was identified in South Africa on November 24, 2021. Multiple countries have now reported cases of Omicron, some with local community transmission. The Government of Canada has updated travel guidance and implemented travel restrictions to some countries as a means to mitigate further spread of the variant. Given this development, UHN and Michener is updating guidance for staff returning from international travel, including the United States, based on current information available.

Thank you to all of Team Michener for following these additional requirements to ensure the safety of our students, patients, visitors and colleagues during this evolving situation.

### What do we know about Omicron so far?

There is speculation that Omicron may be more transmissible and demonstrate “immune escape,” meaning that people may experience re-infections or be less protected by current COVID-19 vaccines. ***However, these features have not yet been confirmed or measured. Severity of infection is still unknown.***

Canada has identified several travel-related cases to date, in Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia. While the situation is rapidly evolving, community transmission of Omicron has not yet been established in the GTA and all cases in Canada so far have been related to travel.

### What guidance has the Government of Canada issued about international travel?

On November 26, and 30 2021 the Government of Canada issued a number of travel restrictions and conditions related to the emergence of Omicron.

Specific travel restrictions were issued for people coming from 10 African nations and a statement of extra caution was made for any [international travel](#). **Note:** this list is subject to change.

- **Canadians returning from countries under restriction:** The Canadian government requires that all Canadians returning from travel from the countries under restrictions have pre-entry, arrival, and Day 8 testing (3 tests), as well as quarantine for 14 days from arrival to Canada.
- **Canadians arriving from countries not under advisory (excluding the United States):** The Canadian government requires that all people entering Canada from outside of the countries under restriction take a pre-entry and arrival PCR test for COVID-19.
- **Unvaccinated** individuals require additional measures, including quarantine for 14 days and PCR testing on Day 8.
- **Vaccinated** individuals must quarantine until they receive a negative arrival COVID-19 PCR test. These requirements may change.
- **Canadians returning from the United States:** Fully vaccinated travellers arriving in Canada from the U.S. are currently exempt from the PCR test under the federal guidelines.

## What do I need to know?

1. Students and staff are discouraged from international travel but travel is a personal decision.
2. Staff and students must inform their supervisor and/or Academic Chair of international travel plans.
3. Following international travel for 10 days, students and staff are encouraged to work from home where possible. Please discuss this with your supervisor or Academic Chair.
4. The screening app (uhnscreen.ca) will be updated to reflect these changes with additional questions related to recent travel.
5. If symptoms consistent with COVID-19 develop, ***even mild or atypical symptoms*** such as headache, fatigue and muscle aches, OR if a rapid antigen test is positive, the staff or student must get a PCR COVID-19 test immediately, self-isolate at home, and report to [Health Services](#) for staff and [healthservices@michener.ca](mailto:healthservices@michener.ca) for students.

A reminder that this is an evolving situation, and that guidelines regarding travel and/or quarantine could change without advance notice either by the Government of Canada or UHN and Michener.