

COVID-19 Guidance for Indoor Recreational Water Facilities

The following guidance should be used by owners and operators of recreational water facilities, including pools, splash pads, spray pads, whirlpools, wading pools and water slides, to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Owners and operators are responsible for ensuring that their recreational water facility is in compliance with all orders made under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#), in addition to [Ontario Regulation 565/90 – Public Pools](#). As every recreational water facility is different, it is the responsibility of owners and operators to review their own policies, procedures, and site-specific operations, while ensuring that the appropriate infection prevention and control measures are implemented and maintained.

The aim and purpose of this document is to assist businesses and organizations with information related to legal requirements pursuant to the Ontario Government’s reopening framework as well as Toronto Public Health's (TPH's) guidance and recommendations to reduce the spread of COVID-19. While efforts are made to ensure these documents provide accurate and timely guidance, for the most up-to-date requirements, owners and operators are encouraged to consult the applicable provincial regulations made under the *Reopening Ontario Act*. This guidance is not intended to nor does it provide legal advice and should not be relied upon or treated as legal advice. Users seeking legal advice should consult with a qualified legal professional. The owner of a business or organization is required to be aware of and comply with all applicable legal requirements. Zoning by-laws and other City by-laws may also provide other applicable restrictions that must also be complied with.

[Roadmap to Reopen: Step 3](#)

[Ontario Regulation 364/20](#) sets out requirements for businesses and organizations that are permitted to open. These requirements have been summarized below as they apply to indoor recreational water facilities (e.g. pools, splash pads, spray pads, whirlpools, wading pools and water slides) that are open:

Compliance with Applicable Laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The person responsible for the business or organization must comply with all applicable laws, including the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and regulations made under it.
Public Health Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The person responsible for the business or organization must follow the advice, recommendations and instructions issued by public health officials, including on physical distancing, cleaning or disinfecting.

<p>Health Screening</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post signs at all entrances to the premises of the business or organization in a conspicuous location visible to the public to inform individuals on how to screen themselves for COVID-19 prior to entering the premises. • The person responsible for an indoor area of a sports, fitness or recreational facility or permit holder must actively screen individuals who enter the facility in accordance with the advice, recommendations and instructions of the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health before they enter the facility. <p>Sample TPH Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patron Screening Poster • Staff Screening Questionnaire
<p>Masks and Face Coverings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person responsible for a business or organization must ensure that all persons wear a mask or face covering that covers their mouth, nose and chin during any period when they are in an indoor area of the premises, or in a vehicle that is operating as part of the business or organization. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some exceptions apply, such as children under the age of two; people with medical conditions that make wearing a mask difficult; and temporary removal to engage in an athletic or fitness activity. ○ Proof of an exemption is not required. • The person responsible for a business or organization must ensure that every person who performs work for the business or organization and whose mask is temporarily removed to consume food or drink is separated from other persons by at least 2 metres distance or by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier. <p>Other Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toronto Bylaw 541-2020 also requires operators to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create a mask policy for their establishment. ○ Communicate this policy to employees and patrons. ○ Post signs at all entrances to the premises in high visibility areas containing the required text. ○ Train employees on the policy, including exemptions. ○ Train employees on how to communicate with, and accommodate people who may be exempt. <p>Sample TPH Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mask Bylaw Checklist and Sample Policy – available in: [PDF] and [Fillable PDF] • Mask and Face Covering Bylaw Sign

<p>Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person shall wear appropriate PPE that provides protection of their eyes, nose and mouth if, in the course of providing services, the person: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ is required to come within two metres of another person who is not wearing a mask or face covering during any period when that person is in an indoor area; and ○ is not separated by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier from a person described above.
<p>Proof of Vaccination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is now mandatory to use the enhanced vaccine certificate with the QR code to gain access to settings that require proof of vaccination, with some exceptions. Businesses and organizations are required to verify the enhanced vaccine certificate using the Verify Ontario app. • The person responsible for a business or organization must require each patron who enters an area of the premises described below to provide, at the point of entry, proof of identification <u>and</u> of being fully vaccinated against COVID-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The indoor areas of facilities used for sports and recreational fitness activities, including waterparks and facilities where personal physical fitness trainers provide instruction, and indoor areas where spectators watch events. • The above requirements do not apply where a patron is entering an indoor area solely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ to use a washroom; ○ to access an outdoor area that can only be accessed through an indoor route; ○ to make a retail purchase; ○ while placing or picking up an order; ○ while paying for an order; ○ to purchase admission; or ○ as may be necessary to the purposes of health and safety. • A business or an organization shall not retain any information provided pursuant to this section. <p>Additional Requirements – Letter of Instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toronto’s Medical Officer of Health issued a Letter of Instruction pursuant to section 2(2.1) of Schedule 1 of O. Reg 364/20, directed to all businesses and organizations with indoor areas of facilities used for sports and recreational fitness activities in the City of Toronto.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All persons responsible for businesses and organizations with indoor areas of facilities used for sports and recreational fitness activities, including facility operators and permit holders, in the City of Toronto are required to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement a policy requiring that each person, 12 years and older, who attends an indoor area of the facility for the purpose of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> actively participating in Organized Sports; or coaching, caregiving at, volunteering at, or officiating Organized Sports, provide, at the point of entry, identification and proof of being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or a valid medical exemption each time they enter. <p>Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proof of Vaccination Guidance for Businesses and Organizations Proof of Vaccination Questions and Answers for Businesses and Organizations Poster: Proof of Vaccination Posters for Businesses
<p>Capacity Limits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indoor recreational water facilities may open if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the total number of members of the public, who are permitted to be in an indoor area of the facility at any one time, shall not exceed 50 per cent capacity*. the total number of members of the public, who are permitted to be in an indoor spectator area of the facility at any one time, shall not exceed 50 per cent of the area's usual seating capacity or 500 persons, whichever is less The person responsible for the indoor recreational water facility must post a sign in a conspicuous location visible to the public that states the capacity limits under which the facility is permitted to operate. <p>*The 50 per cent indoor capacity limit is calculated by taking 50 per cent of the maximum occupant load of the business or facility, or part of a business or facility, as applicable, as calculated in accordance with Ontario Fire Code.</p> <p>Sample TPH Resource:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum Occupancy Sign
<p>Food/Drink</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every indoor spectator must remain seated while consuming food or drink.

<p>Entrances and Managing Lines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that patrons are not permitted to line up or congregate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ outside the business or place, or at an outdoor attraction or feature within the business or place, unless they are maintaining a physical distance of at least two metres from other groups of persons. ○ inside an indoor part of the business or place unless they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ maintaining a physical distance of at least two metres from other groups of persons; and ▪ wearing a mask or face covering, unless entitled to an exemption.
<p>Safety Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a safety plan, which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ describes measures and procedures that have been or will be implemented in the business to reduce the spread of COVID-19; ○ includes measures for screening, physical distancing, masks or face coverings, cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects, the wearing of PPE, and preventing and controlling crowding. ○ includes information on how the business, place or event will prevent gatherings and crowds, manage requirements for mask wearing and physical distancing where patrons are permitted to line up or congregate (as noted above), and mitigate the risk of any interactive activities, exhibits or games. ○ is in writing and made available to any person for review, upon request; and ○ is posted in a conspicuous place where it is likely to come to the attention of those working in or attending the business. • Prior to permitting any participants in an organized sports league or event to practise or play the sport in the facility, the facility must ensure that the league or event has prepared a safety plan in accordance with O. Reg. 364/20. <p>Sample TPH Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 Safety Plan Checklist available in: [PDF] and [Fillable PDF], and Instructions for Completing the COVID-19 Safety Plan Checklist
<p>Cleaning and Disinfecting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person responsible for the business or place must ensure the following are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms, showers or similar amenities made available to the public; and ○ any equipment that is rented to, provided to, or provided for the use of members of the public.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applies to computers, electronics and other machines or devices that members of the public are permitted to operate.
Waterparks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterparks may open if they meet the conditions set out in O. Reg. 364/20, schedule 2, section 27.
Teaching and Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses that provide in-person teaching and instruction may open if they meet the conditions set out in O. Reg. 364/20, schedule 2, section 14. • Refer to COVID-19 Guidance for In-Person Instructional Services for more information.

Recommendations for Meeting and Enhancing Compliance

The following recommendations are offered to assist owners and operators of indoor recreational facilities (e.g., pools, splash pads, spray pads, whirlpools, wading pools, water slides) in meeting and enhancing compliance with the requirements summarized in this document.

Measures for all Workplaces, Businesses and Organizations

- Review the [COVID-19 Guidance for Employers, Workplaces and Businesses](#) to plan and implement protocols to keep staff and patrons safe.
- **Health Screening**
 - For facilities conducting active in-person health screening of patrons, refer to [guidance](#) for specific screening station recommendations.
- **Managing COVID-19 in the workplace**
 - Employers must immediately notify Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600 as soon as they become aware of two or more people who test positive for COVID-19 within a 14-day interval in connection with their workplace premises, as per [Toronto Public Health Instructions for Workplaces](#) and [Class Order](#) for Workplaces Experiencing a COVID-19 Outbreak.
 - See Toronto Public Health's [Guidance on Managing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) for more information.

Staff Training

- Educate staff on the proper [use of masks/face coverings](#). They should change masks when moist or dirty. See more information on the [use of non-medical masks or face coverings](#).
- Discourage staff from gathering together in the lunchroom or common areas.
- Educate staff on hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette:
 - [Wash hands](#) frequently with liquid soap and warm water for at least 15-30 seconds, or use hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration) if water and soap is not available.

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- [Cover coughs](#) or sneezes with the elbow or a tissue. Immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash hands.
- Encourage staff to download the [COVID Alert app](#) so they can be notified directly if they have been in close contact with someone who was contagious with COVID-19.
- Train staff on the proper use of PPE (e.g. gloves, masks, face shield), when required. Refer to [Public Health Ontario](#) resources.
- Inform staff that physical distancing must not compromise safety supervision or the bathers' safety (e.g. rescues, first aid).
- Lifeguards who are actively providing safety supervision should not be expected to monitor adherence to measures outlined in this document (e.g. health screening, physical distancing). These responsibilities should be assigned to another staff member.
- Train staff on safety measures to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission during first aid and resuscitation. For additional information, consult industry experts such as the [Lifesaving Society](#) and the [Canadian Red Cross](#).

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- In addition to the PPE requirements set-out in above, staff should wear PPE consisting of a surgical/procedure mask and eye protection (goggles or face shield) if physical distancing or separation via a physical barrier cannot be maintained.
- Non-medical masks or face coverings are not suitable for use as PPE.
- See more information about [PPE](#).

Entrances and Managing Lines

- In addition to the requirements set out above, encourage patrons to wear a mask or face covering while waiting in line outdoors.
- Post signs which outline physical distancing requirements in lines and discourages individuals from gathering on the property or nearby right of way.
- Use visual markers, stickers or pylons to encourage physical distancing between patrons while waiting to be screened.
- Post an employee at the entrance to monitor the number of patrons entering and leaving, and control/stagger patron entry to prevent crowding.
- Once the capacity limit is reached, allow one patron in for every patron that leaves.
- Make hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration) available for use.

Physical Distancing

- Post [physical distancing signs](#) throughout the facility, including at all entrances, change rooms, washrooms decks, etc.
- Remind staff and patrons to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from other people they don't live with.
- Use visual markers, stickers or pylons to encourage physical distancing, where appropriate (e.g. entrances, showers, pool deck, diving boards).
- Design a walking flow for the whole facility (e.g. creating one-directional walking paths with prominent signage and/or floor markings), where appropriate (e.g. showers, change rooms, pool deck).
- Encourage physical distancing in the water and on the deck (e.g. one-directional swimming lanes with prominent signage and/or deck markings, reminders to leisure bathers).
- Stagger times for lap swims, training and other activities or programs.
- Place markers or circles so patrons know where to stand when waiting or interacting with staff.
- Install plexiglass/barriers, if possible, where there will be close contact between staff and patrons (e.g. service counters, cashiers).
- Temporarily decommission and/or mark unavailable change room/washroom amenities (e.g. toilet stalls, urinals, sinks, showers, lockers) such that they are at least two metres apart.
- Reduce/remove unnecessary pool deck furniture (e.g. lounge chairs), where possible to permit adequate physical distancing of patrons.
 - Arrange furniture at least two metres apart, and place signs/notices in fixed seating spaces (e.g., poolside benches).
 - Mark furniture locations so that they may be repositioned easily (e.g. tape/paint on the floor).

Capacity Limits

- Post [signs](#) indicating the capacity limits for rooms which patrons or staff may have access to, such as change rooms, washrooms, showers, etc.
- Monitor capacity of the facility, including change rooms and other areas, as appropriate.
- If capacity is reached and physical distancing is difficult or not possible, advise patrons to return at another time.
- **Note:** facilities must ensure that the total number of patrons permitted at any one time on the deck and in the pool does not exceed the maximum patron load as determined by [O. Reg. 565/90 – Public Pools](#).

Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

- Increase the introduction and circulation of outdoor air by maximizing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system settings, or by opening windows and doors, where possible. Avoid recirculating air.
- Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk.
- Ensure the HVAC system(s) are properly maintained.
- Where provided, use the highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the HVAC system.
- Keep areas near HVAC inlets and outlets clear.
 - Seating and activities should be arranged away from areas with high airflow (i.e. not in front of air vents).
- Rooms where indoor ceiling fans are used should have an upward airflow rotation.
- If portable fans are used, limit the blowing of air across people and surfaces by positioning them to provide an upward movement of air.
- For more information, review TPHs [COVID-19: Transmission, Aerosols and Ventilation](#) fact sheet.

Communication

- Inform staff and patrons about the changes you have made to protect them against COVID-19, such as using posters, updated websites, email or social media accounts.
- Encourage staff and patrons to get a [COVID-19 vaccination](#) if they haven't already.
- Designate a contact person (e.g. supervisor) to respond to COVID-19 concerns from staff and patrons.
- Encourage patrons to download the [COVID Alert App](#) so they can be notified directly if they have been in close contact with someone who was contagious with COVID-19.
- Print and post signs in highly visible areas, including at entrances and washrooms as a reminder for everyone to practice public health measures:
 - [COVID-19: Posters & Graphics](#)
 - [COVID-19 Vaccine Resources](#)
 - [COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#)

Other Resources

[COVID-19 Guidance: Employers, Workplaces & Businesses](#)

[COVID-19 Guidance: Indoor & Outdoor Sports & Recreational Fitness Facilities](#)

[Lifesaving Society – Guide to Reopening Pools and Waterfronts](#)

[Public Pool, Public Spa and Class C Facilities Operator's Manual](#)

[Recreational Water Facility Opening Notification Form](#)

More Information

For more information, visit our website at toronto.ca/COVID19 or call us at 416-338-7600.

References

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) - Considerations for Aquatic Venues*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/parks-rec/aquatic-venues.html>

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Lifesaving Society. (2020). *Guide to Reopening Pools and Waterfronts*. Retrieved from: https://www.lifesavingsociety.com/media/324917/98guide_reopening%20pools_waterfronts_final%20-%20june%202020.pdf