

COVID-19 Guidance for Sports & Recreational Fitness Facilities

This guidance is intended to support sports and recreational fitness activities, including:

- Facilities for sports, including community centres
- Gyms
- Fitness and recreation studios (e.g. yoga, dance)

Note: Saunas, steam rooms, bath houses and oxygen bars remain CLOSED.

Under Ontario's [Reopening Ontario Act – Stage 3 Orders](#), facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities may open if they comply with the following conditions:

- **Physical distancing:** every person who engages in sports or a recreational fitness activity, other than a team sport, must maintain a physical distance of at least two metres/six feet from every other person at all times.
- **Numbers permitted in each class, organized program or activity:** must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least two metres/six feet from others, and cannot exceed:
 - 50 persons, if any of the activities are taking place indoors¹, or
 - 100 persons, if all of the activities are taking place outdoors.
- **Numbers in areas containing weights or exercise machines:** must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least two metres/six feet from every other person, and cannot exceed 50 people¹.
- **Areas where gathering limits do not apply:** physical distancing must be maintained but there are no gathering limits in tennis courts, pools, arenas, etc.
- **Numbers of spectators:** must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least two metres/six feet from every other person, and in any event cannot exceed,
 - 50 spectators, if the spectators will be indoors¹, or
 - 100 spectators, if the spectators will be outdoors.
- **Team sports:** may only be practised or played if they do not allow or have modified to avoid physical contact between players.
- **Organized team sports in a league:** may only be practised or played if the league:
 - has no more than 50 players and does not permit its teams to play against teams outside of the league, or
 - divides its teams into groups of 50 or fewer players and does not permit teams in different groups to play against one another or against teams outside of the league.

¹ For facilities operating in compliance with a [plan approved by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health](#), the indoor capacity limits apply on a per room basis, including areas for spectators.

Revised September 11, 2020

- **Cleaning and disinfecting equipment:** all equipment must be cleaned and disinfected between each use or at the end of the completion of a game or practice. Do not use equipment or have activities if the structures cannot be cleaned between each use.
- **Day camps:** facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities may open to provide space for a day camp for children. See [COVID-19 Guidance for Day Camps](#).
- **Pools and other aquatic amenities:** see [Guidance for Recreational Water Facilities](#) for more information.
- **Events:** for use of the facility or part of a facility for a private event, the rentable space should follow gathering limits of 50 individuals indoors and 100 individuals outdoors. See [COVID-19 Guidance for Indoor & Outdoor Events & Gatherings](#).

Responsibility of owners and operators

All owners and operators of gyms, fitness studios and sports facilities have a responsibility to assess the risks associated with their facility and operations, and their ability to mitigate these risks. They are responsible for implementing measures to reduce the risk of infection among all those who participate in their activities (e.g. staff, volunteers, attendees).

COVID-19 Transmission

Respiratory transmission: [COVID-19](#) is an illness that is spread mainly from person-to-person through close contact from respiratory droplets of someone with COVID-19. The respiratory droplets can travel up to two metres/six feet when we cough, sneeze or talk.

Contaminated surfaces: It is possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes. The virus can survive on plastic and stainless steel surfaces for [up to 72 hours](#).

More information about COVID-19 can be found in the Toronto Public Health [COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#).

Protective Measures to Keep Everyone Safe

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Keep a two metre/six feet distance from others, when possible.
- Wash your hands often, and avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Wear a face mask or covering when you are in indoor public spaces, as per the City [bylaw](#), and when you cannot maintain a two metre/six foot distance outdoors.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Practice physical distancing

- [Physical distancing](#) means keeping a distance of two metres/six feet from others. Plan and modify the layout to ensure enough space is provided for staff and customers to maintain physical distancing.
- Calculate the maximum number of people permitted in the facility that allows for two metres/six feet physical distancing, or complies with provincial gathering limits, **whichever is less**. Limit the number of people accordingly.
 - Maximum occupancy for physical distancing can be calculated as one person per two metres squared (four square metres or 43 square feet) of publicly accessible floor space.
 - Calculate and post occupancy limits within each space, including washrooms, locker rooms, and fitness rooms.
- Review and coordinate the use of all amenities to ensure physical distancing can be maintained in common areas if the facility is a community centre, multi-purpose facility, or other complex with multiple uses.
 - The ability to maintain physical distancing in common areas may not be possible if the permitted limit in each room, area, or amenity is utilized.
- Designate and manage entry and exit points to control the number of people entering the facility and each space within. If the maximum number of people is reached, allow one person in for every person that leaves.
 - Consider a registration process with assigned time slots and set duration periods for using the facility.
 - Stagger arrivals and departures, where possible, to reduce congestion at points of entrance and exit and in common areas.
- Modify and arrange site/floor plan to maintain physical distancing and reduce contact.
 - Assign spaces for organized fitness classes (e.g. by marking circles or squares on the floor to designate where each person should exercise).
 - Move equipment and machines to allow for at least two metres/six feet between users, or install [physical barriers](#) (e.g. plexiglass).
 - Design traffic flow that encourages one-way movement with prominent signage and/or floor markings.
 - Increase floor marking and signage to allow people to find machines, rooms and amenities more easily.
 - Ensure enough space for people in high traffic areas and places where people may gather.
 - Identify areas where crowding and bottlenecks are common, such as lobbies, locker rooms, washrooms, and use staff or barriers to redirect people who may gather in these areas.
- Monitor and manage lines outside and within the facility.
 - Post [physical distancing signs](#) at all entrances, service desks or otherwise.
 - Place visual / textural markers spaced two metres/six feet apart (e.g. tape on the floor, pylons, signs) to encourage physical distancing and guide customers.

- Assign staff to monitor lines and to make public announcements reminding customers to keep two metres/six feet apart.

Safely use partitions to separate customers

- Use, to the extent possible, existing rooms to support operations.
- Large areas, such as weight rooms, gymnasiums and sports courts, can be subdivided into one or more separate rooms, and be separated by a non-permeable barrier to allow each room to have a capacity of 50 customers at any one time.
- The height and width of the partition should reflect the room dimensions and effectively physically separate groups (i.e. floor to ceiling). The height of the partition should be above the breathing zone of individuals to prevent the spread of respiratory droplets expressed by customers.
- The partition should not interfere with ventilation, and airflow and must meet fire code regulations.
- The partition should be made of hard, non-porous materials that can be easily and routinely cleaned and disinfected (i.e. between uses). For optimal infection prevention and control, there should be no physical contact with the partition.
- If ceiling fans are present, the location of the fans should take into consideration the air blowing from the fans to prevent respiratory droplets blowing from one person to another within or between the partitioned sections.
- Customers should be restricted to one sport or recreational fitness room or area for the duration of their scheduled activity. Consider placing employees at these points to prevent customers from crossing into other areas.

Support and encourage hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette

- Download and post [Wash your Hands](#), [Cover your Cough](#), [Protect Yourself](#) signs in high traffic areas.
- Instruct customers to wash their hands before and after workouts and to use hand sanitizer when transitioning between pieces of equipment.
- Use of paper towels is the preferred method for drying hands.
- Provide hand sanitizers dispensers (70-90% alcohol concentration) by entrances and throughout the facility.
- Ensure an adequate supply of liquid soap, paper towel, hand sanitizer, tissues, and waste receptacles throughout the facility and in washrooms and locker rooms.

Support and encourage proper use of masks

- Facility owners and operators **must develop a policy and protocols** on the wearing of masks, as per a new City of Toronto [bylaw](#), and train staff on the policy and protocols. More information is available [here](#).
- All customers must wear a mask or face covering indoors, except while engaging in physical activity.

Revised September 11, 2020

- Masks or face coverings are strongly recommended outdoors when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Surgical/procedural masks and eye protection must be worn by all workers in sport or recreational fitness rooms or areas.
- If customers are wearing face coverings and physical distancing is maintained, the employer may determine that face coverings are appropriate for workers.
- Surgical/procedural masks may also be deemed appropriate by the employer if patron masking is voluntary.
- Workers who work in sport or recreational fitness rooms or areas of the facility should be encouraged to keep wearing a surgical/procedural mask outside of those areas instead of switching to a non-medical face covering to prevent contamination.
- Exceptions for the personal protective equipment (PPE) requirement include individuals with a medical condition that make it difficult to wear PPE, individuals who are unable to put on or remove PPE without assistance, and people who require accommodation in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- Instructors leading a fitness class who cannot wear PPE should have a transparent, [non-permeable barrier](#) between themselves and customers.
 - The barrier should be large enough to account for movement of the instructor.
 - Consult with an Occupational Health & Safety specialist for support.
- Educate staff on the [proper use and disposal of masks](#) and PPE.

Front desk, sales and registration

- Install [physical barriers](#) at front/service desks (e.g. plexiglass).
- Encourage online or telephone sales and registration processes.
- Use a contactless process to log attendance (e.g. scanner), if necessary.
- Encourage electronic payment by debit or credit card, and to tap instead of using the PIN pad.
- Remove unnecessary items such as magazines, pens etc.
- Review the City of Toronto's COVID-19 Guidance for [Retail Settings](#) and [Food Premises](#), as applicable.

Modify programming

- Consider alternative methods of service (e.g. virtual classes).
- Where possible, hold classes and activities outdoors instead of indoors.
- Limit or cancel activities where distances or other appropriate controls cannot be implemented.
- Offer more classes/activities at a reduced capacity rather than hosting a single large class/activity.
- Allow sufficient time between classes/activities to allow safe and distanced exit and entry, and sufficient environmental cleaning in between.
- Consider closing or restricting access to non-essential common areas (e.g. merchandise kiosks, concession stands, communal lounges).

Revised September 11, 2020

- Encourage instructors reduce the volume of music and use a microphone instead of shouting.

Enhance environmental cleaning and disinfection

- Avoid opportunities for the virus to spread through touch, either directly or indirectly, on surfaces and objects.
- Assign staff to complete environmental cleaning and disinfection duties.
- Equipment must be cleaned and disinfected between user sets or at the end of a game.
 - Establish and post clear policies requiring customers to wipe down equipment before and after every use.
 - Provide adequate supplies and garbage bins for disposing used materials.
 - Consider keeping all non-stationary equipment (e.g. balls, foam rollers, blocks) in one area to facilitate cleaning and disinfecting in between uses. Station an employee nearby to wipe down equipment after each use before being put back into circulation.
 - Encourage customers to bring their own gear for personal use, when practical and possible (e.g. yoga mat and blocks, helmet, racquets, water bottle, towels).
- Ensure frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces and objects in staff and public areas (e.g. doorknobs, stereos, water re-fill stations, railings) at least twice a day and when visibly dirty.
 - Review Public Health Ontario's [Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#) fact sheet.
 - Refer to Health Canada's [list of hard surface disinfectants for use against coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).
- Ensure locker rooms, change rooms, washrooms, hand sinks, water fountains and showers are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary environment.
 - Consider removing complimentary shared personal items such as hairspray, hairdryers, and deodorant sprays. If they are offered, ensure they are cleaned and disinfected frequently.
 - Water fountains should only be used to re-fill water bottles. Do not allow individuals to drink directly from them.
- Provide waste receptacles lined with a plastic bag, and empty as often as necessary.
- Consider temporarily suspending towel service.
- Increase ventilation with fresh air by increasing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system or by opening windows. Avoid recirculating air.
 - Minimize the use of fans.
 - Ceiling fans high up in the room (e.g. 25 feet up in a gym), are less of a concern than ceiling fans on low ceilings.
 - Pedestal fans or high-powered fans on/near the floor should not be used.

Maintain Healthy Operations

Implement health and safety protocols for staff

- Review the [COVID-19 Guidance for Employers, Workplaces and Businesses](#) to plan and implement protocols to keep staff safe.
- Implement attendance policies for staff, including maintaining a list of the names, contact information and attendance records of all staff.
- Train staff on all new policies and protocols related to COVID-19 practices including physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and the City of Toronto mask by-law and policy.

Conduct staff and customer health screening

- Inform all staff and customers that they cannot attend the facility if they are ill.
- [Actively screen](#) all individuals (staff, customers, spectators etc.) entering the facility.
 - Temperature checks are not required or recommended.
- Direct anyone who answers YES to any of the screening questions to go home and self-isolate, and contact Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000 or go to an [assessment centre](#) to get tested.
- Staff who conduct screening should be behind a physical barrier (e.g. plexiglass) or stand at least two metres/six feet away from the individual. Where screening cannot occur behind a barrier or must involve contact with a customer or visitor, at a minimum a surgical/ procedural mask and eye protection is required. Hand sanitizer, tissue, and a lined no-touch waste basket or bin should also be available.
- [Signage](#) should be posted on the entry doors and throughout the facility directing individuals to inform the facility staff if they feel unwell or have symptoms of COVID-19.

Develop plans for dealing with staff and customers who become ill while at the facility

- Develop plans/procedures/protocols that specifically address how to safely care for staff and/or customers who develop COVID-19 related symptoms or who need care (e.g. injury, illness, emotional upset) while at the facility.
 - Identify a space where they can be isolated from others until they can go home safely in a private vehicle and/or undergo medical assessment.
- Keep a list of names and contact information for those who visit the facility. Toronto Public Health will use this list to notify and provide instructions for close contacts to self-isolate or self-monitor for [COVID-19 symptoms](#).
- Any personal information that is collected for COVID-19 contract tracing can only be used for this purpose, unless an individual provides their consent. Records should only be kept for 30 days, and then shredded.
- Contact Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600 for guidance if you have been notified that a staff or customer has tested positive and/or you have concerns that others may have been exposed while at the facility.

Increase public health awareness

- Provide information to staff and customers about facility operations (e.g. public health measures, available amenities) through different communication platforms (e.g. web, email social media).
- Encourage staff and customers 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.
- Download and display posters in high visibility areas in your setting to promote messages about how to stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic:
 - [Physical Distancing](#)
 - [Face & Mask Coverings](#)
 - [Protect Yourself](#)
 - [Information about COVID-19](#)
 - [Wash your Hands](#)
 - [Cover your Cough](#)
 - [Screening Posters for Entrances](#)

Other resources

[COVID-19 Guidance for Employers, Workplaces and Businesses](#)

[Reopening Toronto Businesses & Workplaces during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Four Step Public Health Planning Guide](#)

[COVID-19 Guidance for Outdoor Playgrounds and Fitness Equipment](#)

[Guidelines for permitting the use of sports fields and multi-use fields during COVID-19](#)

[Provincial Guidance for facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities during COVID-19](#)

[Provincial Guidance for Fitness and Swimming Pool Facilities during COVID-19](#)

[Provincial Guidance for the Sports Sector during COVID-19](#)

More information

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

Also see Province of Ontario, [A Framework for Reopening our Province: Stage 3](#).