

COVID-19 Guidance for Sports & Recreational Fitness Facilities

Toronto is currently in the **red control level** of the province's [COVID-19 Response Framework](#).

This guidance document describes the requirements that gymnasiums, health clubs, community centres, multi-purpose facilities, arenas, exercise studios, yoga and dance studios and other fitness facilities must comply with under the [Reopening Ontario Act](#) and City of Toronto [specific enhanced measures](#).

Facilities operated by a sports team in a professional league, and persons training for Olympic/ Paralympic Games are beyond the scope of this document. See Provincial Orders [O. Reg. 263/20](#) for more information. Information for pools, splash pads, spray pads and wading pools can be found in [COVID-19 Guidance for Recreational Water Facilities](#).

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).

Closures (S. 22 under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*; *Reopening Ontario Act*)

- Indoor group fitness and exercise classes are not permitted.
- Team sports are not permitted.
 - Exception: training sessions for members of a sports team that do not include games or scrimmage games.
 - See [COVID-19 Checklist for Hockey Players](#).
- Activities likely to result in individuals coming within two metres of each other are not permitted.
- Spectators are not permitted indoors.
 - Exception: a person under the age of 18 years who is engaged in activities in the facility may be accompanied by one parent or guardian.
- Locker rooms, change rooms, and showers are closed.
 - Exception: if required to provide access to equipment storage, a washroom, or a portion of the facility is used to provide first aid.
 - Exception: if used in conjunction with a pool, splash pad, spray pad or wading pool.
- Saunas, steam rooms, bath houses and oxygen bars remain closed.

Capacity limits

- **Area containing weights or exercise machines:**
 - 10 patrons or less indoors.
 - 10 patrons or less outdoors.

- **Exercise or fitness classes:**
 - Not permitted indoors.
 - 25 patrons or less outdoors.
 - Each class, organized program/activity must take place in a separate outdoor area.
- The total number of patrons permitted at the facility participating in *all* classes and organized programs/activities must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from other people, and in any event cannot exceed 10 people.
- All sports and recreational programs (including amateur and professional dance) in other facilities (arenas and multiplexes) are limited to 10 people indoors and 25 outdoors.

Dance classes

- Dance classes are permitted if:
 - they are delivered for the purpose of teaching or training amateur or professional dancers in dance techniques,
 - all participants are pre-registered for the classes and no walk-ins are permitted, and
 - the other conditions set out in subsection 13(1) of [Ontario Regulation 263/20](#) are complied with.
- Dance competitions must not be provided or hosted.
- See [COVID-19 Checklist for Dancers and Dance Studios](#) for more information.

Workplace health and safety

Review the [Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) to plan and implement protocols to keep staff and customers safe, including:

- **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette**
 - Encourage hand washing before and after sports and recreational activities.
 - Encourage the use of hand sanitizer when transitioning between pieces of equipment.
- **Health screening for staff and customers**
 - [Actively screen](#) all staff, spectators and patrons before they enter the facility. Questions can be answered on paper, online or by asking people directly.
 - Temperature checks are not required or recommended.
- **Staff attendance and operations**
 - Assign a compliance officer to ensure implementation of occupational health and safety and infection prevention & control measures.
 - Collect contact information for all individuals who enter an indoor area of the facility.
- **Managing COVID-19 in the workplace**

Safety Plan

Operators must prepare and make available a [safety plan](#), and the plan must:

- Be available no later than seven days after the requirement first applies.

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- Describe measures/procedures that have been or will be implemented in the business, place, facility or establishment to reduce spread of COVID.
- Include measures for screening, physical distancing, masks, cleaning, disinfecting and personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Be in writing and made available to any person for review, on request.
- Be posted in a visible place to come to the attention of those working or attending the location.

Use of masks

- All staff and patrons must wear a mask or face covering indoors, as per a new City of Toronto [bylaw](#) and [O. Reg. 263/20](#).
- All patrons must wear a mask while using weights and exercise machines in gyms.
- Masks or face coverings are strongly recommended outdoors when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- 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](#).

Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- A surgical/procedure (medical) mask and eye protection must be used by workers when they are unable to maintain physical distance of at least two metres from any unmasked individuals where a physical barrier is not present.
- Surgical/procedural masks and eye protection must be worn by all workers in sport or recreational fitness rooms or areas.
- The employer must determine what PPE is required and ensure that it is worn by workers.
- Educate staff on the [proper use and disposal of masks](#) and PPE.

Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems

- Ensure the HVAC system(s) are properly maintained.
- Increase outdoor air-exchange by:
 - maximizing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system settings, or
 - open windows and doors, if it is safe to do so.
- Use the highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the HVAC system.
- Keep seating and activities away from air vents and areas with high airflow.
- Do not obstruct HVAC inlets and outlets.
- When using ceiling fans, use an upward airflow rotation.
- If portable fans are used, position fan with an upward movement to avoid blowing of air across people and surfaces.

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- There is no evidence the use of portable air purifiers will prevent the spread of COVID-19. If used, follow the manufacturer's directions to decide where best to place the device. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on maintenance.
- For more information, review the [COVID-19: Transmission, Aerosols and Ventilation](#) fact sheet.

Enhance cleaning and disinfection

- Any equipment must be **cleaned and disinfected** between each use.
 - Establish and post clear policies requiring people to wipe down equipment before and after every use.
 - Provide adequate supplies and garbage bins for disposing used materials.
 - Encourage customers to bring their own gear for personal use, when practical and possible (e.g. helmet, racquets, water bottle, towels).
- Do not use equipment or fixed structures that cannot be cleaned between each use.
- Assign staff to complete environmental cleaning and disinfection duties.
- 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 COVID-19](#).
- Ensure washrooms, hand sinks and water fountains are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary environment.
 - 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.

Practice physical distancing

- [Physical distancing](#) of at least **three metres** is required in areas with weights and exercise machines, and exercise/fitness classes. Physical distancing of at least **two metres/six feet** is required in all other areas.
- Plan and modify the layout of your facility to ensure enough space is provided for staff and customers to maintain physical distancing.

Calculate capacity

Calculate the maximum number of people permitted in the facility that allows for physical distancing as noted above, or complies with provincial gathering limits, **whichever is less**.

- In areas with weights and exercise machines the maximum occupancy for physical distancing can be calculated as one person per three metres squared (nine square metres or 97 square feet) of publicly accessible floor space.

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- For all other areas, 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.
- Post occupancy limits within each space, including washrooms, locker rooms, and fitness rooms.

Limit capacity

Limit the number of people based on calculations above.

- 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.
 - Stagger arrivals and departures, where possible, to reduce congestion at points of entrance and exit and in common areas.
- 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.

Modify the space

Modify and arrange site/floor plan to maintain physical distancing and reduce contact.

- Assign spaces for organized activities (e.g. by marking circles or squares on the floor to designate where each person should exercise).
- 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 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, washrooms, and use staff or barriers to redirect people who may gather in these areas.

Manage lines

Monitor and manage lines within and outside 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.
- Encourage the use of masks/face coverings for guests waiting/lining-up outside.
- Assign staff to monitor lines and to make public announcements reminding customers to keep two metres/six feet apart.

Modify programming

- Consider alternative methods of service (e.g. virtual classes).
- Where possible, hold classes and activities outdoors instead of indoors.
- Cancel activities where distances or other appropriate controls cannot be implemented.

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- 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).
- Any instruction given to members of the public who are engaged in a class, organized program or organized activity that is not a sport:
 - must be delivered through a microphone if the instructor would otherwise need to raise their voice beyond the level of normal conversation, and
 - must not encourage loud talking, singing or shouting.
- Music played in the facility cannot exceed the decibel level at which normal conversation is possible.

Front desk, sales and registration

- Appointments/reservations are required for entry. If participating in a team sport, only one reservation per team is required.
- Duration of stay is limited to 90 minutes or less at one time, unless engaged in a sport.
- 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.

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 information and display posters in high visibility areas in your setting to promote messages about how to stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic:
 - [COVID-19: Posters & Graphics](#)
 - [COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#)

Other resources

[COVID-19 Checklist for Dancers and Dance Studios](#)

[COVID-19 Checklist for Hockey Players](#)

[COVID-19 Guidance for Recreational Water Facilities](#)

[COVID-19 Guidance for Golf Courses](#)

[Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)

[Guidance for Employers on Managing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)

[Reopening Toronto Businesses & Workplaces: 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 Fitness and Swimming Pool Facilities during COVID-19](#)

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

Use of the facility for other purposes, such as [child care](#), [day camps](#) or as a [meeting or event space](#), must comply with all applicable [laws](#), guidelines or the provincial Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH) advice with respect to that use.

More information

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

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *COVID-19 Employer Information for Gyms and Fitness Centers*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/gym-employers.html>

Government of Alberta. (2020). *COVID-19 Information - Guidance for sports, physical activity, and recreation*. Retrieved from: <https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-relaunch-sports-physical-activity-and-recreation.pdf>

Work Safe BC. (2020). *Gyms and fitness centres: Protocols for returning to operation*. Retrieved from: <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation/gyms-and-fitness-centres>