COVID-19 Guidance for Sports & Recreational Fitness Facilities

This guidance document describes the requirements that indoor and outdoor sports and recreational fitness facilities, such as gyms, health clubs, exercise studios, waterparks, facilities where physical fitness trainers provide instruction, must comply with under the *Reopening Ontario Act*.

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](https://ontario.ca.gov/...) for more information.

Owners and operators 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, patrons). See Provincial Orders [O. Reg. 263/20](https://ontario.ca.gov/...) for more information.

The aim and purpose of this document is to assist individuals and businesses with information related to the Ontario Government’s reopening framework as well as Toronto Public Health requirements to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It is important to know that breaches of some of these directions will constitute offences under provincial regulations or other public health legal requirements. While we aim to provide relevant and timely information, no guarantee can be given as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided. 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.

See [COVID-19 Guidance for Outdoor Recreational Amenities](https://ontario.ca.gov/...) for information about amenities such as outdoor ice rinks, ski and toboggan hills, golf courses, driving ranges, tennis courts and sports fields.

Information for the public can be found in the [COVID-19 Checklist for Using Sport, Fitness & Recreational Amenities](https://ontario.ca.gov/...).

### What is Permitted (Reg. 263/20)

**Facilities for indoor sports and recreational fitness activities**
- No indoor sports or indoor recreational classes are permitted at any indoor sport and recreational facilities.
Revised January 12, 2022

(1) A facility for indoor sports and recreational fitness activities may open if it meets the following conditions:

- The facility is operated by, or for the sole use of, persons who are athletes, coaches or officials training or competing to be a part of Team Canada at the next summer or winter Olympic Games or Paralympic Games, if the persons are,
  - identified by a national sport organization that is either funded by Sport Canada or recognized by the Canadian Olympic Committee or the Canadian Paralympic Committee, and
  - permitted to train, compete, coach or officiate under the safety protocols put in place by a national sport organization mentioned above.

- The only persons permitted to enter and use the facility must be,
  - players, athletes, coaches or officials who are using the facility for the purposes of training or conditioning, and
  - such staff as are strictly necessary to operate the facility and support the training or conditioning of the players.

(2) A facility for indoor sports and recreational fitness activities may open if it meets the following condition:

- The facility must open solely for the purpose of providing space for any, some or all of the following:
  - A provider of child care within the meaning of the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014.
  - Mental health support services or addictions support services, so long as no more than 10 people are permitted to occupy the space.
  - The provision of social services.

(3) A facility for indoor sports and recreational fitness activities may, but is not required to, open if it meets the following conditions:

- The facility must be open solely for the purpose of allowing use of the facility by,
  - persons with a disability, within the meaning of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, who,
    - have received a written instruction for physical therapy from a regulated health professional who is qualified to provide the instruction, and
    - are not able to engage in the physical therapy elsewhere,
  - such staff as are strictly necessary to operate the facility and support the provision of the physical therapy, and
  - such support persons or service animals as may be necessary for the person with a disability.
The facility must have established a health and safety protocol for the use of the facility that is consistent with sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 7 of Schedule 1 of O. Reg. 263/20, and the facility must be operated in compliance with the health and safety protocol.

The person responsible for the facility must,
- record the name and contact information of every person who enters and uses the facility,
- maintain the records for a period of at least one month, and
- only disclose the records to a medical officer of health or an inspector under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* on request for a purpose specified in section 2 of that Act or as otherwise required by law.

(4) A facility for indoor sports and recreational fitness activities may open in compliance with section 8 of Schedule 1 of O. Reg. 263/20 – professional and elite amateur sports.

Professional and elite amateur sports is beyond the scope of this guidance. See O. Reg. 263/20 for details.

**Facilities for outdoor sports and recreational fitness activities**

Facilities for outdoor sports and recreational fitness activities may open if they comply with the following conditions:

- The number of spectators at the facility at any one time must not exceed,
  - for a facility that has an area designated for spectator seating, 50 per cent of the usual seating capacity, and
  - for a facility that does not have an area designated for spectator seating, 50 per cent capacity, determined by taking the total square metres of the area, dividing that number by 8 and rounding the result down to the nearest whole number.

- Every outdoor spectator must wear a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin, unless they are entitled to an exception or are seated with members of their own household only, and every member of the household is seated at least two metres from every person outside their household.

- The person responsible for the facility, or, where there is no such responsible person, the person holding a permit for the use of the facility, must,
  - record the name and contact information of every member of the public who enters the facility,
  - maintain the records for a period of at least one month, and
  - only disclose the records to a medical officer of health or an inspector under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* on request for a purpose specified in section 2 of that Act or as otherwise required by law.

- The person responsible for the facility or, where there is no such responsible person, the person holding a permit for the use of the facility, 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.

- 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.

### Personal physical fitness and sports trainers

Personal physical fitness and sports trainers may open if they comply with the following conditions:

- Any services must be provided outside.
- The personal trainer or sports trainer must prepare a safety plan.
- The personal trainer or sports trainer must,
  - record the name and contact information of every member of the public whom they are providing services to,
  - maintain the records for a period of at least one month, and
  - only disclose the records to a medical officer of health or an inspector under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* on request for a purpose specified in section 2 of that Act or as otherwise required by law.
- The personal trainer or sports trainer must actively screen individuals in accordance with the advice, recommendations and instructions of the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health before they engage in personal physical fitness or sports training activities.

### Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination

- Proof of vaccination is required for outdoor facilities with a usual capacity of 20,000 or more people.
  - Effective January 4, 2022, only the enhanced vaccine certificate with official QR code will be acceptable proof of vaccination to access sports and recreational fitness facilities. Vaccine receipts without a QR code will not be accepted.
  - Learn more at [Proof of vaccination information for businesses and organizations](https://www.toronto.ca/covid-19/proof-of-vaccination/).

### Encourage COVID-19 Vaccination

- It is strongly recommended that all employers implement a workplace vaccination policy. Find more information at [COVID-19 Vaccine Information for Employers](https://www.toronto.ca/covid-19/vaccine/).
- A person responsible for the facility may elect to require patrons who wish to enter to provide proof of identification and of being [fully vaccinated](https://www.toronto.ca/covid-19/vaccine/) against COVID-19. Physical distancing and capacity limits still need to be followed (see below).
- Encourage patrons and staff age 5 and older to get vaccinated for COVID-19.
Measures for all Workplaces, Businesses and Organizations
Review the Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace to plan and implement protocols to keep staff and patrons safe. Operators must also consider the following:

- **Health screening for staff and participants**
  - The person responsible for the facility, permit holder or personal trainer must actively screen all individuals, including staff and patrons, before they enter the facility.
  - People who become ill while at the amenity should go home immediately, and self-isolate. They should review the City of Toronto website for more information about COVID-19.
  - Remind staff and participants to stay at home when they are ill, even if symptoms are mild.

- **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette**
  - Encourage participants to practice good hand hygiene before, during and after using the amenity.
  - Provide hand sanitizer with 70-90% alcohol concentration for staff and patron use, if possible.

- **Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting**
  - Washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms, showers or similar amenities must be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.
  - Ensure frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces and objects at least once a day and when visibly dirty. See Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings for more information.
  - If possible, assign staff to their own equipment.
  - Encourage participants to bring their own gear for personal use, when practical and possible (e.g. water bottle, yoga mat, training aids).
  - Any equipment rented or used by members of the public must be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain sanitary condition.
    - 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.

**Safety Plan**
- Operators, including personal trainers, must prepare and make available a written safety plan.
Additionally, 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 the O. Reg. 263/20.

- The plan must describe measures/procedures that have been or will be implemented in the facility or establishment to reduce spread of COVID-19, including screening for symptoms, physical distancing, use of masks and/or personal protective equipment, frequent cleaning and disinfecting, and preventing and controlling crowding.

- Personal physical fitness trainers, and facilities for indoor or outdoor sports and recreational fitness activities shall also include information as to how the business, place or event will,
  - prevent gatherings and crowds in the business or place or at the event;
  - ensure that physical distancing and wearing of masks in lines as applicable is complied with in the business or place or at the event; and
  - mitigate the risk of any interactive activities, exhibits or games that may be included in the business or place or at the event.

- The safety plan must be posted in a visible location and be available to anyone upon request.
- Use the COVID-19 Safety Plan Checklist to develop your safety plan.

**Capacity Limits**

- Subject to any other provisions set out in O. Reg. 263/20, the person responsible for a place of business or facility that is open to the public shall limit the number of members of the public in the place of business or facility so that,
  - the members of the public are able to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person in the business or facility; and
  - the total number of members of the public in the business or facility at any one time does not exceed 50 per cent capacity
    - 50 per cent capacity is determined 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 Regulation 213/07 (Fire Code), made under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997.
  - Unless otherwise provided, a capacity limit set out in O. Reg 263/20 applies to the whole business or facility, not to individual rooms or areas within the business or facility.
- Designate and manage entry and exit points to control the number of people entering the amenity. If the maximum number of people is reached, allow one person in for every person that leaves.
Modify the Space & Ensure Physical Distancing

Modify and arrange site/floor plan to encourage physical distancing and reduce contact, where possible.

- 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. Operators may post signs with the number of people allowed into each room/space.
- Remove furniture/equipment for ease of movement.
- Design traffic flow that encourages one-way movement with prominent signage and/or floor markings.
- Assign spaces for organized activities (e.g. by marking circles or squares on the floor to designate where each person should exercise).
- Stagger arrivals and departures, where possible, to reduce congestion at points of entrance and exit and in common areas.
- All individuals should maintain at least two metres physical distancing from people they don’t live with, when possible, with limited exceptions.
- Monitor and manage lines within and outside the facility.
  - Operators must ensure patrons maintain two metres physical distancing from other groups of persons while waiting in line indoors and outdoors.
  - Masks are required indoors, and recommended outdoors while waiting in line.

Record Keeping, Registrations and Reservations

- The person responsible for the facility, permit holder or personal trainer must,
  - record the name and contact information of every member of the public who enters the facility,
  - maintain the records for a period of at least one month, and
  - provide this information to Toronto Public Health upon request.
- Appointments/reservations are recommended, where possible. Encourage online or telephone sales and registration processes.
- Ask participants to arrive no more than 10 minutes before their reserved time slot and leave the facility immediately after the activity.
- Encourage participants to arrive at the facility fully dressed/prepared for the activity.
- Install physical barriers (e.g. plexiglass shield) at point of sale, registration and help desks where physical distancing between staff and participants is difficult.
- Use a contactless process to log attendance (e.g. scanner), if necessary.
Modify Programming

- Consider alternative methods of service (e.g. virtual classes).
- When holding classes or activities outdoors, if using a tent or canopy, at least two full sides must be open to the outdoors and not substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable barriers.
- 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. communal lounges).
- Music played in the facility should not exceed the decibel level at which normal conversation is possible.
- Review the City of Toronto's COVID-19 Guidance for Retail Settings and Food Premises, as applicable.

Food & Drink

- Indoor dining is not permitted.
- Sports and recreational fitness facilities that serve food/or and drink need to review the Guidance for Restaurants, Bars, and other Food Service Premises.

Wear a Mask

- Toronto by-law 541-2020 and Ontario regulation requires the use of masks in all public indoor settings, with limited exceptions.
- Masks are strongly recommended outdoors when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Masks are required for spectators outdoors unless seated with household members only and every member of the household is seated at least two metres from every other person outside their household.
- Operators with indoor spaces that are open to the public are required to develop a policy on the wearing of masks. Use the Checklist on Mask By-law and Sample Policy.
- Appropriate personal protective equipment that covers the eyes, nose and mouth must be worn if, while providing service in an indoor area, the person
  - is required to come within two metres of another person who is not wearing a mask or face covering; and
  - is not separated by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.
- Staff should be trained on the mask policy, and understand who is exempted from wearing a mask. Proof of exemption is not required.
- More information on the bylaw is available here.
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
  - Opening windows and doors, if it is safe to do so
- Use the highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the HVAC system, if provided.
- 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.
- 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.

Communications

- Inform staff and patrons about facility operations and new measures taken to keep everyone safe.
- Print posters for entrances and other locations, including mandatory mask bylaw.
- Encourage customers and staff to download the COVID Alert app. They may be notified if they have been in close contact with someone who test positive for COVID-19.

More Information

Visit our website at toronto.ca/COVID19 or call us at 416-338-7600.

Other Resources

Ontario Public Health Measures and Advice
Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace
COVID-19- Guidance for Outdoor Recreational Amenities
COVID-19 Checklist for Using Sports, Fitness & Recreational Amenities
COVID-19 Guidance for Outdoor Playground & Fitness Equipment

References

