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, etc. 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. 364/20 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 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. 364/20 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.

Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination

- Starting November 1, 2021, all people age 12 and older who participate in indoor organized sports, including players, coaches, officials and spectators, are required to provide proof of being fully vaccinated or a valid medical exemption.
  - Effective January 1, 2022, children have a grace period of 12 weeks from their 12th birthday during which they must provide identification at the point of entry, but do not need to provide proof of being fully vaccinated against COVID-19. This is to allow a reasonable opportunity for vaccination to be completed.
  - See Toronto’s Medical Officer of Health Letter of Instruction for more information.
- Provincial regulations require patrons to show proof of being fully vaccinated to access some businesses and settings, including facilities used for sports and recreational fitness activities.
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. 364/20.

- 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.

Manage Capacity & Encourage Physical Distancing

While capacity restrictions may be lifted due to proof of vaccination requirements, limiting capacity to reduce crowding and maintaining physical distance as much as possible are still recommended to prevent spread of COVID-19 especially when masks are removed.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 the space

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.

- 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).

Modify programming

- Consider alternative methods of service (e.g. virtual classes).

- Where possible, hold classes and activities outdoors instead of indoors.
  - 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.

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 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.
• Masks may be temporarily removed to engage in an athletic or fitness activity, to consume food or drink, or to receive services that require the removal of the mask.
• 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
  o is required to come within two metres of another person who is not wearing a mask or face covering; and
  o 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:
  o Maximizing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system settings, or
  o 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.

Exceptions
See O. Reg. 364/20 Schedule 2, section 16 for exceptions that apply to any part of the facility that is being used,
• for a day camp or overnight camp for children operating in a manner consistent with the safety guidelines for COVID-19 for day camps produced by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health;
• by a provider of child care within the meaning of the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014; or
• for the purpose of the provision of social services.

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
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 Recreational Water Facilities
COVID-19 Guidance for Outdoor Playground & Fitness Equipment

References