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.

**Provincial Orders (O. Reg. 364/20)**

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

- **Indoor capacity:** The total number of members of the public permitted to be indoors at any one time must be limited to 50 per cent of the capacity of the facility.
  - This can be 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 Regulation 213/07 (Fire Code), made under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997.
• **Spectator capacity:** The number of spectators at the facility at any one time must not exceed the following limits:
  o **Indoors + designated spectator area:** 50 per cent of the usual indoor seating capacity, or 1,000 persons, whichever is less.
  o **Outdoors + designated spectator area:** 75 per cent of the usual outdoor seating capacity, or 15,000 persons, whichever is less.
  o **Indoors, no designated spectator area:** limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person in the indoor area of the facility and in any event may not exceed 50 per cent capacity, as calculated above, up to 1,000 persons.
  o **Outdoors, no designated spectator area:** must not exceed 75 per cent capacity up to 5,000 persons.
    ▪ 75 per cent capacity can be calculated by taking the total square metres of area accessible to the public, dividing that number by 1.33, and rounding the result down to the nearest whole number.

• **Signage:** The person responsible for the facility or permit holder 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.

• **Physical distancing:** Every person in an indoor area of the facility must maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person in the establishment except,
  o from their caregiver or from members of the person’s household,
  o if they are engaged in sports or games at facilities for indoor or outdoor sports and recreational fitness activities, or
  o if they are seated spectators at a seated event at such a facility.

• **Spectator masks:**
  o **Indoors:** spectator must wear a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin, unless they are entitled to an exemption.
  o **Outdoors:** spectator must wear a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin, unless they are entitled to an exemption, 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.

• **Safety plan:** 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.

• **Record keeping:** The person responsible for the facility, permit holder or personal trainer must,
o record the name and contact information of every member of the public who enters the facility,
o maintain the records for a period of at least one month, and
o provide this information to Toronto Public Health upon request.

• Screening: The person responsible for the facility, permit holder or personal trainer 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.

• Exceptions: See O. Reg. 364/20 Schedule 2, section 16 for exceptions that apply to any part of the facility that is being used,
o 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;
o by a provider of child care within the meaning of the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014; or
o for the purpose of the provision of social services.

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
  o Actively screen all individuals, including staff and patrons, before they enter the facility.
  o 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.
  o Remind staff and participants to stay at home when they are ill, even if symptoms are mild.

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

• Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting
  o Washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms, showers or similar amenities must be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.
  o 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.
  o 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.

### 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.

Manage Capacity

- Limit the number of members of the public at the facility as per O. Reg. 364/20 (described above).
- 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.

Registrations and Reservations

- 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. This will help operators manage capacity and physical distancing. It will also allow others the opportunity to utilize the facility.
- 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.

Wear a Mask

- Toronto by-law 541-2020 and Ontario regulation requires the use of masks in all public indoor settings.
- 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.

Practice Physical Distancing
• All individuals must maintain at least two metres physical distancing from people they don’t live with.
  o Exceptions include members of the public engaged in sports or games at facilities for indoor or outdoor sports and recreational fitness activities and seated spectators at a seated event at such a facility.
• Monitor and manage lines within and outside the facility.
  o Ensure patrons maintain two metres physical distancing while waiting in line indoors and outdoors.
  o Masks are required indoors, and recommended outdoors while waiting in line.

Modify the space
Modify and arrange site/floor plan to encourage physical distancing and reduce contact.
• 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 while maintaining physical distancing.
• 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.
o 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.
o Limit capacity under the tent/canopy to ensure physical distancing can be maintained.
o Arrange tables and chairs to promote physical distancing.
o Require masks or face coverings if physical distancing cannot be maintained.

- Cancel activities where distances or other appropriate controls cannot be implemented.
- 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.

**Encourage Vaccination**

- Encourage guests and staff who are 12 years of age and older to get vaccinated with the COVID-19 vaccine. Read and share information about the vaccine and where to get vaccinated.
- Post signs and share COVID-19 vaccine resources, available in multiple languages.

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

