

# COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Gyms, Fitness Studios and Community Centres

## Guidance for Safely Reopening Gyms, Fitness Studios and Community Centres

April 1, 2021.

Version 13.0



*Effective 12:01 a.m. on Saturday, April 3, 2021, the Southwestern Public Health region is entering the provincial shutdown with the rest of the Province. The Southwestern Public Health guidance documents below reflect the restrictions within the **COVID-19 Response Framework** that are currently on pause. Please be advised that the **Provincewide Shutdown** guidance prevails. In the provincial shutdown, facilities for indoor or outdoor sports and recreational fitness activities must close, with limited exceptions.*

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### Key Points

- Some requirements for sports and recreational fitness facilities will vary depending on our region's current level within the **COVID-19 response framework** (Green-Prevent, Yellow-Protect, Orange-Restrict, Red-Control or Grey-Lockdown). See [www.swpublichealth.ca](http://www.swpublichealth.ca) for our current level.
- Physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) between participants is required. In **yellow, orange, and red** levels, the physical distancing of 3 metres between patrons is required in areas with weights or exercise equipment and in exercise/fitness classes.
- Face coverings are required by staff and patrons in enclosed public spaces.
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfection throughout the facility, strict promotion of hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette are critical to safe reopening.
- HVAC system(s) should be properly maintained, and outdoor air should be introduced whenever possible (i.e. opening windows and doors).

**The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly. This guidance is subject to change. Please visit the Southwestern Public Health website ([www.swpublichealth.ca/](http://www.swpublichealth.ca/)) regularly for updates and additional guidance.**

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This document guides businesses reopening **gyms, fitness studios, and community centres**. For all other outdoor and indoor facility guidance and recommendations (e.g. soccer fields, baseball diamonds, indoor pools, ice rinks etc.), please visit [here](#).

**Please note:** Steam rooms and saunas are not permitted to open at this time.

## COVID-19 Response Framework

Facilities for sports and recreational fitness must follow the requirements outlined in [Ontario's COVID-19 Responses Framework](#). Restrictions in place will vary depending on the colour level the Southwestern Public Health region is in. **Each colour level includes all restrictions in the colour level above.** For guidance on Pool opening, see the [Guidance for Pools, Splashpads and Wading Pools](#).

Colour Level	Restrictions
<b>General Public Health Measures (all colour levels)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Workplaces must screen all workers and essential visitors entering the work environment. See the <a href="#">COVID-19 Screening Tool for Workplaces</a> for more information.</li> <li>✓ Personal Protective Equipment that protects the eyes, nose and mouth is required if a worker is required to come within 2 metres of someone who is not wearing a face covering and is not separated by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.</li> <li>✓ All businesses or facilities must limit capacity so that every member of the public can maintain 2 metres of physical distance from every other person.</li> <li>✓ Businesses or places that are open shall ensure that equipment, washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms and showers that are accessible to the public are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.</li> <li>✓ Face coverings are required to be worn by members of the public and workers in indoor public places and workplaces, with limited <a href="#">exceptions</a>.</li> <li>✓ All workplaces must develop a <a href="#">COVID-19 workplace safety plan</a> and have it available should an inspector or compliance officer request to see it during an inspection.</li> </ul>
<b>Green "Protect" Level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Must maintain a minimum 2 metres of physical distancing, unless engaged in sport.</li> <li>✓ The maximum number of people in the space, as long as physical distancing can be maintained:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 50 people indoors or 100 people outdoors in classes.</li> <li>○ 50 people indoors in areas with weights or exercise equipment.</li> <li>○ 50 spectators indoors or 100 spectators outdoors.</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ Capacity limits are applied on a per room basis if operating in compliance with a <b>plan approved by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health</b>.</li> <li>✓ Team or individual sports must be modified to avoid physical contact.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maximum of 50 people per league and cannot play teams outside of your league.</li> <li>○ High-performance athletes and parasports.</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ Limit the volume of music to be low enough that a normal conversation is possible.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Implement other measures as required to prevent shouting by both instructors and members of the public.</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ Face coverings are required except when engaging in exercising or playing sports.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Patron screening (passive) is required (e.g. posting a <b>sign</b> at the entrance)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Yellow "Prevent" Level</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Increase spacing between patrons to 3 metres in areas with weights or exercise equipment and in exercise/fitness class spaces.</li> <li>✓ The maximum number of people in the space, as long as physical distancing can be maintained: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 10 people per room in each indoor fitness or exercise class. Each class must take place in a separate room and the total number of people in classes inside cannot exceed 50.</li> <li>○ 25 people for each outdoor fitness or exercise class and the total number of people in classes outside cannot exceed 100.</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ Must collect contact information for all members of the public that enter the facility.</li> <li>✓ Require reservation for entry; one reservation for teams is acceptable.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Orange "Restrict" Level</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Maximum of 50 people total in areas with weights and exercise machines and all classes (maximum number of people in the space is no longer applied on a per room basis as outlined in green level).</li> <li>✓ Screening of patrons is required, in accordance with <b>instructions issued by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health</b> (active screening).</li> <li>✓ Patrons may only be in the facility for 90 minutes, except if engaging in sport.</li> <li>✓ No spectators permitted (exemption for one parent/guardian for supervision of children under 18 years of age).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Red "Control" Level</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The maximum number of people in the space, as long as physical distancing can be maintained: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 10 people in indoor areas with weights and exercise machines.</li> <li>○ 10 people in all indoor classes or 25 people in all outdoor classes.</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ Team sports must not be practiced or played except for training (no games or scrimmage).</li> <li>✓ Activities that are likely to result in individuals coming within 2 metres of each other are not permitted.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Grey "Lockdown" Level</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Facilities for indoor sports and recreational fitness activities are closed except for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The sole use of high-performance athletes, including parasport athletes and specified professional leagues (e.g. NHL, CFL, MLS, NBA)</li> <li>○ Specified purposes (e.g. day camps, child care)</li> </ul> </li> <li>✓ Outdoor fitness classes, outdoor team training, and outdoor personal training permitted with restrictions.</li> <li>✓ Outdoor recreational amenities (e.g. ice rinks, ski hills, snow trails) are open with restrictions (e.g. no team sports)</li> <li>✓ Community centres and multi-purpose facilities (e.g. YMCA) allowed to be open for permitted activities (e.g. child care services, day camps, social services)</li> </ul>

### Staff Screening and Attendance

- Screening employees for COVID-19 is mandatory (please see the [COVID-19 Screening Tool for Workplaces](#) for more information). Ensure all staff complete screening before each shift and do not attend work while sick. **Before each shift, staff must be screened** to identify if they:
  - Have **symptoms of COVID-19** such as fever, cough, or difficulty breathing,
  - Have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days and/or

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- Have been instructed by public health to self-isolate due to travel or contact history.
- Any staff member that answers "yes" to any of these conditions must be sent home and advised to contact their local public health unit.**
- Staff should be reminded to stay home if they are sick. If an employee becomes ill with COVID-19 **symptoms** while at work, they must go home right away to **self-isolate** and contact their health care provider or an **Assessment Centre** to get tested.
  - Workers with a household member who has symptoms and is awaiting COVID-19 test results should self-isolate and not attend work until results are known. If the household members' results are positive, the worker must self-isolate as directed by public health. For more information, visit the **self-isolating section of our website**.
  - Have a flexible sick policy, so staff do not come to work sick.
  - Remind employees about the importance of reporting illness to their supervisor/manager.
  - Stagger or adjust working hours and shifts to reduce the number of staff in your business.

### Face Coverings and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Staff and patrons must wear a face covering at all times while in indoor spaces. Face coverings may be temporarily removed during athletic or fitness activities or while eating and drinking. Face coverings should be worn when patrons enter and exit the facility and in common areas such as locker rooms or washrooms. A full list of exemptions and more information on the use of face coverings can be **found here**.
- Staff working in indoor areas accessible only to employees who can physically distance (at least 2 metres) from all other staff members in that space do not need to wear a face covering while in this area.
- PPE covering the eyes, mouth and nose is required when a worker must come within 2 metres of another person who is not wearing a face covering (i.e. engaging in a fitness activity). At a minimum, this would include a **medical mask** and eye protection (face shield or goggles). If a plexiglass or impermeable barrier separates the worker from the person not wearing a face covering, additional PPE is not mandatory (but a face covering is still required).
- Employers should:
  - Have a policy in place outlining how the provincial face covering requirements will be implemented as per the **Southwestern Public Health Letter of Instruction**.
  - Provide staff with a sufficient supply of face coverings.
  - Consider having a supply of face coverings for customers.
  - Train staff on implementing the provincial face covering regulation, including how to manage individuals claiming exemptions.
  - Provide all staff with information on **proper use, removal, and washing of face coverings**.
  - Post **signs** at entrances to remind customers of **face covering requirements**.

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## General Facility Considerations

- In all levels of the COVID-19 Response Framework, a safety plan must be prepared and available upon request. Information on how to create a safety plan is [found here](#).
  - The safety plan should describe the measures and procedures implemented or will be implemented to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. It should include information on screening, face coverings, physical distancing, use of personal protective equipment and cleaning and disinfection.
  - A copy of the safety plan must be posted in a conspicuous place.
- Encourage physical distancing and discourage congregating. Post signage throughout the facility to remind patrons to physically distance.
  - Stagger scheduling for the use of all amenities in the facility (e.g. workout areas, classes, rinks, courts, spectators, etc.) to support physical distancing in common areas, including entrances, exits, and stairwells.
    - The ability to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres in common areas may not be possible if the permitted limit in each room, area or amenity is utilized at the same time. If this is the case, not all rooms, areas, or amenities can be open at one time.
  - Consider limiting spectators if there is insufficient space in common areas such as washrooms, hallways, and other areas or amenities.
  - Limit the capacity of rooms to ensure physical distancing is possible. A general recommendation is to allow 4-5 square metres per person or about 25% of fire code occupancy.
  - Follow capacity limits for the facility as outlined in the COVID-19 Response Framework chart above.
  - Develop a plan to allow for uncongested entry and exit, such as dedicated one-way entry and exit pathways for each activity area.
  - Patrons should be encouraged to conduct their workouts and exit the facility without unnecessary delay. Equipment should not be shared or used simultaneously (e.g. working in sets).
- In the **orange** and **red** levels, spectators are not permitted (exemption for one parent/guardian for the supervision of children under 18 years of age).
- Large areas, such as weight rooms, gymnasiums, and sports courts, can be subdivided into one or more separate areas, separated by a non-permeable barrier to allow each room to have a capacity of 50 patrons at any one time (this is permitted in the green and yellow levels)
  - The barrier should ideally span from floor to ceiling or above the breathing zone of individuals.
  - Patrons should be restricted to one sport or recreational fitness room or area for the duration of their scheduled activity.
  - Each area must have a separate entrance and exit.
- Washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms and showers:

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- Encourage patrons to arrive at the gym or fitness centre in workout clothes and avoid using locker rooms on site.
- When locker rooms are used, a disinfectant spray or wipes should be available for patrons to disinfect locker contact surfaces before and after use.
- Hand sanitizer should also be available for patrons to use prior to entering and after exiting the space.
- Clean and disinfect **washrooms**, locker rooms, change rooms and showers frequently.
- Set capacity limits for locker rooms and adjust lockers to support physical distancing.
- Remove self-serve and common-use items such as hair dryers.
- Ensure washrooms are always stocked with liquid soap and paper towels. Antibacterial soap is not required to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Drinking fountains and water bottle filling stations
  - Ensure frequent cleaning and disinfecting according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
  - Place signage at water fountains advising users to:
    - Avoid placing their mouth on the spout of the fountain or allowing their water bottle to come into contact with the nozzle.
    - Wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration) if the fountain requires touching of buttons or levers.
  - If possible, recommend patrons bring their water to reduce the amount of use fountains receive.
- Limit the volume of music in the facility to be low enough that a normal conversation is possible.
- In the **orange** and **red** levels, patrons may only be in the facility for 90 minutes, except if engaging in sport.
- In the **red** level, team sports must not be practiced or played except for training (no games or scrimmage) and activities that are likely to result in individuals coming within 2 metres of each other are not permitted.

### Control Access and Screening

- A staff member should always be present when the facility is open. If patrons have uncontrolled access, it may not be possible to ensure that physical distancing rules are followed, and that disinfection of equipment between uses is occurring. Unrestricted access 24 hours a day without staff present should be suspended (if this is typically offered).
- Consider implementing a booking system to allow patrons to book specified time slots, with a limited number of patrons at each time. Allow adequate time between time slots to ensure that proper cleaning and disinfection can occur and to reduce crowding at check-in.
  - In the **yellow**, **orange**, and **red** levels, reservations are required for entry (only one reservation needed for teams)

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- In the **green** and **yellow** levels, passive screening of patrons is required (e.g. posting a **sign** at the entrance). In the **orange** and **red** levels, screening of patrons in accordance with **instructions issued by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health** is required (active screening).
- In the **yellow**, **orange**, and **red** levels, contact information for all members of the public that enter the facility is required.
- Manage customer entry points by placing tape markers or cones every 2 metres (6 feet) to provide patrons with a visual cue that encourages physical distancing.

### Group Fitness Classes

- The total number of people permitted in a class or organized activity at any one time is limited to the number of people that can maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres in the **green** level, and of 3 metres in the **yellow**, **orange**, and **red** levels.
- Specific capacity limits for fitness classes apply in each colour level and are detailed in the COVID-19 response framework chart above.
- Assigned spaces are strongly recommended for organized fitness classes (e.g. by marking circles on the floor to designate where each person should exercise).
- Limit the volume of music (e.g., conversation level) and require a microphone for instructors as needed to avoid shouting.
- Increase the physical distance, or install physical barriers, between the instructor and participants.
- Participants should be encouraged to bring their equipment. If this is not possible, the equipment provided should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected between uses. Ensure that adequate time is allowed for proper cleaning and disinfection.
- Where fitness activities involve participants in close proximity to the floor, the floor should be cleaned thoroughly between each class.
- Actions of singing along to the music or shouting back at the instructor should be discouraged.
- Consider creating cohorts of classmates by assigning specific times for the same participants to partake in classes.
- Reduce opportunities for classmates to gather before and after a class within the facility.
- Ensure group fitness classrooms are well ventilated (e.g. open windows if possible).
- For information on outdoor group fitness classes in the **grey (lockdown)** level, see the “Outdoor Fitness/Training in the Grey (Lockdown) Level” section below (page 9).

### Weight Rooms and Exercise Machines

- The total number of people permitted in areas containing weights or exercise machines is limited to the number of people that can maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres at all times.
  - o In the **yellow**, **orange**, and **red** levels, the spacing between patrons in areas with weights or exercise equipment must be increased to 3 metres.

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- Note: If it is not possible to space cardio machines far enough apart, other measures should be considered, such as only allowing patrons to use every other machine or creating physical barriers between machines.
- Specific capacity limits for areas with weights and exercise equipment apply in each colour level and are detailed in the COVID-19 Response Framework chart above.
- Consider using markers on the floor to define designated areas and to manage the flow of participants.
- Provide patrons with either disinfectant wipes or disinfectant in a spray bottle and paper towels for disinfecting equipment and surfaces.
  - Disinfectants for patrons should be conveniently located. Patrons should be required to wipe down the equipment before and after use. Discontinue the use of re-usable towels and cloths.
  - Consider increasing the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting of equipment by staff.

### Signage

- Post a **sign** at the entrance reminding customers who are sick to delay their visit.
- Post **signage** at the entrance indicating that all persons in the indoor space must wear a face covering.
- Post signs throughout the facility to make patrons are aware of the physical distancing requirements, enhanced sanitation procedures (including reminders for members to wipe equipment before and after each use), and any other instructions and limitations, as applicable. Sample posters are found in the additional resources below.
- Use visual cues (e.g. signs, posters, floor markings, directional arrows, stanchions, etc.) to guide patrons through the facility and ensure physical distancing.

### Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection

- Enhanced **Cleaning and Disinfection** is critical to reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- It is essential to first clean, then disinfect surfaces.
- Clean and sanitize high-touch surfaces frequently (door handles, countertops).
  - Wipe down debit machine between customers with a disinfectant/sanitizer
- Whenever possible, use contactless forms of payment and check-in.
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60-90% alcohol concentration) or handwashing stations at entry and exit points and high traffic areas (i.e. lobby, change rooms, washrooms, workout/class areas), and encourage their use.
- Most regular household cleaning products are effective at eliminating the virus. Cleaning and disinfectant products should have an 8-digit Drug Identification Number (DIN) to confirm it is approved for use in Canada. Check the expiry dates of products and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

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- Cleaning/disinfection wipes should only be used for surfaces, and according to the manufacturer's instructions. Alternatively, chlorine bleach solutions may be used for disinfection. Prepare fresh **bleach solution** daily.
- Educate staff on the proper use of cleaning agents and disinfectants, including required disinfectant contact times (amount of time that the product will need to remain wet on a surface to achieve disinfection). Understand safety precautions and the requirement for the use of masks and gloves.
- Remove equipment that may be difficult to clean and disinfect (e.g. soft equipment such as foam rollers, yoga blocks, yoga mats, straps, ropes, etc.).
- Remove communal items such as magazines and complimentary phone chargers.
- Enough time should be allocated to allow for the cleaning and disinfecting of rooms and equipment between bookings.
- Consider additional enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocols for the facility overnight.

### Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

- Increase the introduction and circulation of outdoor air by maximizing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system settings, or by opening windows and doors, where possible. Avoid recirculating air.
- Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk.
- Ensure the HVAC system(s) are properly maintained.
- Where provided, use the highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the HVAC system.
- Keep areas near HVAC inlets and outlets clear.
  - o Seating and activities should be arranged away from areas with high airflow (i.e. not in front of air vents).
- In rooms where indoor ceiling fans are used, ensure the blade moves in a clockwise direction to create an updraft.
- If portable fans are used, limit the blowing of air across people and surfaces by positioning them to provide an upward movement of air.

### Guidance on Food and Beverages

- Premises that provide or sell food must operate in compliance with the Food Premises Regulation.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect the premises before opening
  - o Wash, rinse and sanitize all food contact surfaces
  - o Clean and disinfect all non-food contact surfaces, including high touch areas, such as door handles and equipment knobs
  - o Clean and disinfect all high touch surfaces at least twice daily during operation
- Check the condition of all food and discard unfit products.
- Ensure all equipment is in good working condition.
- Ensure staff are trained on best practices to serve food and beverages.

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- Train staff on the proper use of gloves and face masks.
  - Gloves are not required, but if used, they must be changed between tasks and frequently, with handwashing between uses.
  - Encourage frequent handwashing using the correct technique and avoid touching one's face with unwashed hands.
  - Practice safe respiratory etiquette (i.e. cough or sneeze into a bent elbow, and immediately wash your hands with soap and water).
- For more information on operating a restaurant, please see [Guidance for Food Premises](#).

### Outdoor Fitness/Training in the Grey (Lockdown) Level

- Personal fitness and sports trainers can provide services outside provided they follow the below requirements:
  - Services cannot be provided to more than 10 patrons at one time
  - Services must be delivered through a microphone if, without a microphone, the instructor would need to raise their voice beyond the level of normal conversation.
  - Must not encourage loud talking, singing or shouting. Music cannot be played at a decibel level that exceeds the level at which normal conversation is possible.
  - No spectators are permitted (however, a person under 18 who is engaged in physical fitness or sports training activities may be accompanied by one parent or guardian).
  - 3 metres physical distance required by any person engaged in physical fitness or sports training activities
  - Training sessions for members of a sports team cannot include games or scrimmage games.
  - Activities that are likely to result in individuals coming within 3 metres of each other must not be practised or played
  - Any equipment rented to, provided to, or provided for the use of users must be cleaned and disinfected between uses. Activities that require the use of equipment of fixed structures that cannot be cleaned and disinfected between each use must not be practised or played.
  - Personal trainers or sports trainers must record the name and contact information of every member of the public who they are providing services to and maintain the records for at least one month (and only disclose the records to a medical officer of health or an inspector)
  - The personal trainer or sports trainer must actively screen individuals in accordance with instructions from the [Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health](#) before they engage in personal physical fitness or sports training activities.
  - Services may only be provided to persons who have reserved an appointment. Only one reservation per team is required.
  - The personal trainer or sports trainer shall ensure that every person engaged in physical fitness or sports training activities shall wear a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin (unless an exemption applies).

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## Additional Resources

### Posters:

- [Do Not Enter if Sick](#)
- [Physical Distancing](#)
- [How to Wash Your Hands](#)
- [How to Sanitize Your Hands](#)
- [Face Covering Required](#)

### Assessment:

- [COVID-19 Online Self-Assessment Tool](#)

## References

[Guidance for sport, physical activity and recreation--Alberta Health](#)

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