

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Recreational Water Facilities

Guidance for Recreational Water Facilities In Step 3, Including: Public Pools, Spas, Splash/Spray Pads, Whirlpools, Waterslides, Saunas and Steam Rooms

September 20, 2021

Version 17.0

Key Points

- Starting September 22, 2021, proof of vaccination is required to enter indoor areas of facilities used for sports and recreational fitness activities, including pools and waterparks (exceptions for youth recreational sport).
- All indoor and outdoor pools, splash pads, spray pads, whirlpools, wading pools, water slides, saunas, and steam rooms may open, provided cleaning requirements and capacity limits are adhered to.
- Face coverings are mandatory in all indoor spaces. However, face coverings can be temporarily removed while engaging in an athletic or fitness activity such as swimming.
- The maximum bather load for pools is depended on the capacity limits for each facility type as outlined in this document.
- The routine operation, maintenance, and compliance with the regulatory requirements of the [Ontario Public Pools Regulation](#) must also be followed (i.e. proper filtration and disinfection of water with chlorine or bromine) to assist with removing or inactivating the virus that causes COVID-19 infection.

The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly. Therefore, this guidance is subject to change and reflects the rules for step 3 only. Please visit the Southwestern Public Health website <https://www.swpublichealth.ca/> regularly for updates and announcements. This guidance is to support owners/operators on how to keep recreational water settings operating safely. It includes mandated restrictions and capacity limits in place in step 3 of Ontario's [Roadmap to Reopen](#).

Owners/operators must notify Southwestern Public Health of their intention to reopen their pool. Notification can be completed online at [Southwestern Public Health](#), and a public health inspector will complete a pre-opening inspection.

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COVID-19 Roadmap to Reopen

Pools are recreation facilities and therefore must follow the requirements outlined in the [Roadmap to Reopen](#). The below chart provides an overview of restrictions in place in Step 3 of the Roadmap.

Step in Roadmap	Requirements
<p>General Public Health Measures for all Businesses and Organizations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ NEW Starting September 22, 2021: Starting September 22, 2021, proof of vaccination is required to enter indoor areas of facilities used for sports and recreational fitness activities including pools and waterparks (exceptions for youth recreational sport). ✓ All staff and essential visitors entering the work environment must be actively screened. See the COVID-19 Screening Tool for Workplaces for more information. ✓ Face coverings are required to be worn by members of the public and workers in indoor public places and workplaces, with limited exceptions. ✓ Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) 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. ✓ All businesses must ensure that every person who performs work for the business or organization and whose mask or face covering is temporarily removed to consume food or drink (i.e. at break time) is separated from every other person by a distance of at least 2 metres or an plexiglass or other impermeable barrier. ✓ 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. ✓ All businesses or organizations must post signs at all entrances to the premises in a conspicuous location visible to the public that informs individuals on how to screen themselves for COVID-19 prior to entering the premises. ✓ Businesses or places that are open shall ensure that equipment, washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms, and showers accessible to the public are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition. ✓ All workplaces must develop a COVID-19 workplace safety plan and have it available should an inspector or compliance officer request to see it during an inspection. ✓ The venue must manage line-ups and patrons congregating. Patrons lining up must maintain physical distance of 2 metres and if the line up is inside the business than face coverings are also required.
<p>Step 3</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All indoor and outdoor pools, splash pads, spray pads, whirlpools, wading pools and waterslides are permitted to open. ✓ The maximum capacity for indoor and outdoor water attractions must be posted, which cannot exceed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 50% capacity indoors or as many as is able to maintain 2 metres of physical distance, whichever is less. ✓ 75% capacity outdoors.

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- ✓ All patrons entering any indoor and outdoor water attractions must be passively screened (i.e. by **posting a sign**), unless the water attraction is within a sports facility or community centre.
 - ✓ All patrons using a water attraction at a sports facility or community centre must be **actively screened** prior to entering.
- ✓ Saunas and steam rooms can open as long as capacity is limited to the number that is able to physically distance, but cannot exceed 25% capacity or 250 people, whichever is less.
 - ✓ All patrons entering a sauna/steam room must be **actively screened** prior to entering.
- ✓ Face coverings are not required to be worn while in an indoor pool, splash pad, spray pad, whirlpool, wading pool, waterslide, sauna, or steam room, but must be worn by all patrons and staff at all times when outside of the spaces, with limited exemptions.
- ✓ All businesses must record every patron's name and contact information and keep them on file for 30 days.
- ✓ Spectators within sports facilities or community centres relating to water attractions must have the capacity limit posted, which cannot exceed:
 - ✓ 50% capacity of the seating area up to 1,000 people indoors.
 - ✓ 75% capacity of the seating area up to 5,000 people if there is no outdoor designated seating area, or 15,000 people if there is an outdoor designated seating area.
- ✓ Every indoor and outdoor spectator must wear a face covering, with limited exemptions.
- ✓ Indoor and outdoor swimming lessons are permitted with 2 metres from every other person except where necessary for teaching/instruction that cannot be effectively provided with distance.
- ✓ Training and events for professional and amateur athletes and/or competitions and indoor/outdoor sports leagues permitted.
- ✓ Pools at day camps and overnight camps are open based on guidance from the Ontario CMOH.
- ✓ Lifeguard training & certifications: limited to the number of people who can maintain 2 meters of distance, unless necessary (i.e. for training purposes).

Safety Plan

- In Step 3 of the Roadmap to Reopen, 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. For example, it should include information on screening, face coverings, physical distancing, personal protective equipment, and cleaning and disinfection.
 - A copy of the safety plan must be posted in a conspicuous place.

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- A list of the name and contact information for every patron (i.e. bather and spectator) who enters any indoor or outdoor recreational water facility must be maintained for 30 days and be made available to the health unit if needed for contact tracing purposes.

Screening and Proof of Vaccination

- Screening employees for COVID-19 is mandatory. See the [COVID-19 Screening Tool for Workplaces](#) PDF version for more information. **In addition, 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 10 days.
 - 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 awaiting COVID-19 test results should self-isolate and not attend work until results are known, unless they are fully vaccinated. 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](#).
- **Passive screening** is required for all patrons (bathers and spectators) entering any recreational water facility. Post **signage** for those entering the area about signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
- **Active screening** is required for all patrons (bathers and spectators) prior to them entering at any **indoor** pool, splash pad, spray pad, whirlpool, wading pool, waterslide, sauna and steam room facility, or any outdoors versions of the listed facilities that are at a sports facility and/or community centre. The Province has developed a **customer screening tool** (see PDF version for more detailed information) for active screening.
- Beginning September 22, 2021, proof of vaccination is required required to enter indoor areas of facilities used for sports and recreational fitness activities, including gyms, fitness/sporting/recreational facilities, pools, leagues sporting events, waterparks, and indoor areas of facilities where spectators watch events.
 - Exemption for patrons under 18 years of age who are entering the indoor premises solely for the purpose of actively participating in an organized sport (i.e. swimming classes). The exemption does not apply to youth who are spectators at sporting events or youth using a gym or other area with exercise equipment or weights.
 - Visit [Proof of Vaccination Guidance for Businesses and Organizations under the Reopening Ontario Act](#) and see [Ontario Regulation 364/20](#) (schedule 1, section 2.1) for more information.

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Face Coverings and Personal Protective Equipment

- The Province of Ontario has mandated face coverings in indoor spaces of businesses and organizations. Face coverings must cover the nose, mouth and chin. Some [exemptions](#) to the use of face coverings apply. Read the [full regulation here](#).
- Face coverings must be worn by all staff/patrons while at any recreational water facility. This includes the changerooms, washrooms, hall/entrance ways, etc. Exemptions include individuals who are engaging in activities within a pool, splash pad, spray pad, whirlpool, wading pool, waterslide, sauna, or steam room.
- **All spectators must wear face coverings in indoor and outdoor spectator areas.** Exemptions to the outdoor spectator area include when the spectator(s) is/are able to maintain physical distancing from all individuals that are not in their immediate household.
- If a household is seated together, the entire household must be physically distanced from all other individuals in the spectator area for anyone in that group to be exempt.
- Staff working in indoor areas accessible only to employees who can physically distance themselves from all other staff members in that space do not need to mask while in this area.
- When workers remove their face covering temporarily to consume food or drink (i.e. on lunch break) they must be separated by others by at least 2 metres or by plexiglass or other impermeable barrier.
- Personal protective equipment 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. because they are engaged in physical activity). At a minimum, this would include a **medical mask and eye protection** (face shield, safety glasses, 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).
 - Employees may be exempt from this requirement if in the pool, splash pad, spray pad, whirlpool, wading pool, waterslide, sauna, or steam room.
 - See our [Eye Protection Guidelines](#) for more information on appropriate eye protection.
- Face coverings are recommended when congregating or lining up outside the venue.
- Employers should:
 - Have a policy in place outlining how the provincial face-covering requirements will be implemented as per our [Southwestern Public Health Letter of Instruction](#).
 - Provide staff with a sufficient supply of face coverings and eye protection.
 - Consider having a supply of face coverings for patrons and visitors.
 - Train staff on implementing the provincial face-covering regulation, including how to manage individuals claiming exemptions. Proof of exemption is not required.
 - 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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Physical Distancing and Capacity

- The maximum capacity for indoor and outdoor pools, splash pads, spray pads, whirlpools, wading pools, and waterslides must be posted in a conspicuous location and cannot exceed:
- 50% capacity of the indoor space, or as many as is able to maintain physical distancing; whichever is less.
- 75% capacity of the outdoor space.
For clarity, these percentages must be applied to the bather load listed at public pools. (i.e. indoor pool with a bather load of 120 people, maximum capacity is 60 people or as many as can physically distance, whichever is less. Outdoor pool with a bather load of 120 people, maximum capacity is 90 people unless you are a Class B pool, then must adhere to a maximum of 10).
- Consider developing a reservation schedule and limiting the amount of time bathers can spend in the pool to accommodate the capacity restrictions.
- Limit the capacity in the change rooms, bathrooms, and shower areas to maintain 2-metre physical distancing. If needed, close off every other stall/sink, every two lockers, etc.
- Post capacity limit signs on the doors of all change rooms, bathrooms, and shower areas.
- Patrons (i.e. bathers and spectators) and staff are to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from others as best as possible, unless the individuals are a part of the same household.
- For fitness classes and team sports training/play, a distance of 2 metres between patrons is required except for when participating in contact sports.
- If possible, designate one entry point and one exit point. If the facility only has one entry/exit, put measures in place to provide physical distancing of at least 2 meters and use appropriate signage to direct patrons through the facility.
- The use of markers on the floors and walls helps patrons and staff know where distancing should be maintained and guides patrons through the facility.
- Install plexiglass/barriers, if possible, where there will be close contact between staff and bathers or spectators.

General Cleaning and Disinfection

- There is currently no evidence that the COVID-19 virus is transmitted through water, but the risk of transmission remains present at any workplace and any recreational facility.
- Routine operation, maintenance, and compliance with the regulatory requirements of the [Ontario Public Pools Regulation](#) should kill COVID-19.
- Adequate filtration and disinfection of water (i.e., chlorine or bromine) should remove or inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19 infection.
- Common cleaners and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19. However, only disinfectants with a Drug Identification Number are approved for use in Canada.

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- Every operating day, **routine cleaning and disinfection** must be conducted. This includes a minimum of **twice-daily** cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces (i.e. light switches, doorknobs, toilet handles, shower handles, counters and handrails).
- Water fountain mouthpieces should be frequently cleaned and disinfected in a manner consistent with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Washrooms, change rooms, and showers available to the public should be adequately cleaned and disinfected as per the public washroom and shower guidance document.
- Shared equipment must be cleaned and disinfected between uses.
- Maintain a log to track cleaning and disinfecting activities.

Encourage COVID-19 Prevention Practices

- Staff and visitors should be advised to practice good hand hygiene prior, during and after use of the recreational facility (such as frequent hand washing or alcohol-based hand sanitizer) and respiratory etiquette (sneezing into a bent elbow or disposable tissue).
- Provide hand sanitizer in dispensers near entrances, service counters and other high-touch locations for staff, bather and spectator use.
 - **A wash your hand's poster** can be placed in washrooms
 - **How to sanitize hands poster** can be placed near entrances and other high touch areas
- If a shower is available on the pool deck (without the need to enter the changeroom), encourage its use.

For more detailed information, please use the links provided below or call Southwestern Public Health to speak with your area public health inspector.

- For official COVID-19 information, visit: www.swpublichealth.ca
- For specific information on the reopening of public pools visit: [The Lifesaving Society: Guide to Reopening Pools and Waterfronts](#)
- [Ontario's Roadmap to Reopen – Aquatic Facilities \(The Lifesaving Society\)](#)
- [Proof of Vaccination Guidance for Businesses and Organizations under the Reopening Ontario Act](#)