

# COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Sports and Recreational Fitness

Updated December 1, 2020

This document provides guidelines for owners and operators of indoor recreational facilities, including gymnasiums, health clubs, community centres, multi-purpose facilities, arenas, exercise studios, yoga and dance studios, and other fitness facilities to ensure public safety as they reopen.

This document does not replace guidance from the Province, including [Ontario's COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open, O. Reg. 364/20](#) (regulations for the Prevent, Protect and Restrict levels), [O. Reg. 263/20](#) (regulations for the Control level) and [O. Reg. 82/20](#) (regulations for the Lockdown level). Refer to the provincial [Guidance for facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities during COVID-19](#) for further information. For specific questions about COVID-19 provincial regulations, please contact the **Stop the Spread Business Information Line** at 1-888-444-3659.

To support safe operations, operators must also abide by:

- Provincial [sector-specific guidelines](#) and [guidance documents](#).
- Relevant legislation, including [Consolidated By-law 47-20](#) that requires the wearing of non-medical masks in enclosed public places.
- Additional guidelines provided by specific sport coordinating bodies.

## COVID-19 transmission

COVID-19 is spread mainly from person-to-person through the respiratory droplets of someone infected with COVID-19. The respiratory droplets can travel up to two metres (six feet) through coughing, sneezing or talking. COVID-19 can also be transmitted when a person touches a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touches their mouth, nose or eyes.

## COVID-19 Response Framework Requirements

Ontario's [COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open](#) outlines a graduated approach that allows for public health measures to be introduced and removed incrementally. Each region is placed in one of five levels: Prevent (green), Protect (yellow), Restrict (orange), Control (red) and Lockdown (grey) by the provincial government, based on defined criteria. Residents, businesses and organizations must follow the public health measures for their region's level. See [O. Reg. 364/20](#) (regulations for the Prevent, Protect and Restrict levels) and [O. Reg. 263/20](#) (regulations for the Control level) and [O. Reg. 82/20](#) (regulations for the Lockdown level) for details about the public health measures. Visit [halton.ca/COVID19](https://halton.ca/COVID19) for updates on Halton Region's level.

**Please note:** The measures are cumulative. For example, if a public health unit region is placed in the Restrict level, in addition to the Restrict measures, the measures for lower levels (Protect and Prevent) must also be followed.

### First Level: PREVENT

- A minimum physical distance of two metres (six feet) must be maintained between all people unless they are engaged in a sport.
- Sports may only be practiced or played if they do not allow for physical contact between players or if they have been modified to avoid physical contact between the players (exceptions exist for high performance athletes and parasports)\*.

- No more than 50 people are permitted per sports league (exceptions exist for high performance athletes and parasports)\*. Teams in one league cannot play against teams in a separate league.
- Capacity limits of 50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors must be followed for classes, organized programs and organized activities, provided physical distancing can be maintained.
- Capacity limits of 50 people indoors for areas with weights and exercise equipment must be followed, provided physical distancing can be maintained.
- Spectator limits of 50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors must be followed.
- Capacity limit of 50 people per room if operating in compliance with a plan approved by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- Non-medical masks or face coverings are required by all staff and patrons except when actively engaging in physical activity.
- Music must be no louder than the volume of a normal conversation and loud talking, singing or shouting must not be encouraged. Instructors must use a microphone.
- All staff must be screened before coming to work using the Provincial [screening tool for workplaces](#).
- Shared equipment must be cleaned and disinfected between each use or at the end of play.
- Activities that require the use of fixed structures that cannot be cleaned and disinfected cannot be practiced or played.

## Second Level: PROTECT

Measures from the previous level and:

- Increase spacing between patrons to three metres (ten feet) for areas of a sport or recreational facility where there are weights/weight machines and exercise/fitness classes.
- Indoor fitness or exercise classes must be limited to 10 people per room and 25 outdoors, provided physical distancing can be maintained.
- Keep a record of all patrons (including names, contact information, dates and times) who enter the indoor area of the facility. The records are maintained for a period of at least one month and made available to the local public health unit in the event of an outbreak.
- Require appointments for entry (one reservation for teams is sufficient).
- A [safety plan](#) must be available upon request.

## Third Level: RESTRICT

Measures from the previous levels and:

- Capacity limits of 50 people per facility must be followed in all combined classes, organized programs or organized activities, and areas containing weights or exercise machines. (Please note: plans approved by CMOH would be revoked at this level).
- Actively screen patrons prior to entry by asking if they have COVID-19, COVID [symptoms](#), have travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days, or have had close contact with a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19.
- Limit the duration of stay at the indoor facility (e.g., 90 minutes) for all patrons, with exemptions for sports.
- No spectators are permitted (except for one parent or guardian who may accompany each person under the age of 18 years who is engaged in activities in the facility).
  - Parents/guardians to maintain a minimum physical distance of two metres and if space allows, three metres, from other parents/guardians.
  - Parents/guardians to wear a mask at all times while indoors and are not permitted to consume food or beverages.

## Fourth Level: CONTROL

Measures from the previous levels and:

- Capacity limits of 10 people for all combined classes, organized programs or organized activities, at any one time (physically distanced two metres). Each class, organized program or activity must take place in a separate room.

- Capacity limits of 10 people are permitted to be in an exercise or fitness class at the facility at any one time (physically distanced three metres).
- Capacity limits of 10 people are permitted in an area of the facility containing weights or exercise machines at any one time (physically distanced three metres).
- Facilities that have multiple spaces within the same building (i.e., ice rink, pool, multi-purpose room, etc.) may treat each space as a facility provided that these spaces have separate entrances and washrooms, and that participants in different spaces do not interact with each other.
- Team sports must not be practiced or played except for training (no games or scrimmage). No contact is permitted for team or individual sports.
- Activities that result in individuals coming within two metres of each other are not permitted.
- Locker rooms, change rooms, showers and clubhouses in the facility are closed, except to provide access to equipment storage, a washroom or a room used to provide first aid.
- No spectators are permitted (except for one parent or guardian who may accompany each person under the age of 18 years who is engaged in activities in the facility).
  - Parents/guardians to maintain a minimum physical distance of two metres and if space allows, three metres, from other parents/guardians.
  - Parents/guardians to wear a mask at all times while indoors and are not permitted to consume food or beverages.

Facility Type	Capacity Limit
Fitness Studio	10 people for all areas combined (physically distanced by three metres), excluding staff
Weight and Exercise Machine Areas	10 people for all areas combined (physically distanced by three metres), excluding staff
Library	Number of people that can physically distance by two metres
Multi-Purpose Room	10 people (physically distanced by two metres), excluding facility staff
Ice Pad	10 people per ice pad, excluding coaches and trainers
Tennis Courts	10 people per facility (physically distanced by two metres), excluding coaches and trainers
Soccer Domes/ Indoor Fields	10 people per facility (physically distanced by two metres), excluding coaches and trainers
<b>Please note:</b> Spectators not permitted in any facility. One parent or guardian is permitted for each child under 18-years old for supervisory purposes. Maximize physical distance between parents (three metres where possible and a minimum of two metres), require masks, and prohibit food or beverages.	

#### Fifth Level: LOCKDOWN

- Facilities for indoor sports and recreational fitness activities are closed except for use by high performance athletes including parasport athletes, and specified professional leagues, or for specified purposes (for example, day camps and child care)\*.
- Outdoor recreational amenities (such as ice rinks, ski hills, snow trails) may open with restrictions (for example, no team sports).
- Community centres and multi-purpose facilities are allowed to be open for permitted activities (for example, child care services, day camps, social services, etc.).

\* Parasport athletes are 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. High performance athletes are athletes who play in professional sports leagues such as the NHL, CFL, MLS or NBA.

## Additional COVID-19 Public Health Measures

The following COVID-19 Public Health Measures are recommended by Halton Region Public Health and should be considered in all levels of Ontario's [COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open](#).

### Screen for COVID-19 symptoms

- Place [signage](#) at entrances informing patrons that they should only enter if they do not have COVID-19 symptoms.
- Recommend that patrons complete Ontario's [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) prior to arriving.
- If feasible or when required:
  - actively screen patrons prior to entry by asking if they have COVID-19, COVID [symptoms](#), have travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days, or have had close contact with a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19.
  - maintain a record of all patrons (including names, contact information, dates and times) who enter the facility. These records must comply with privacy requirements and could support case and contact tracing by the local public health unit in the event of an outbreak.

### Maximize physical distancing

- A physical distance of two metres (six feet) must be maintained at all times by all people who are not from the same household.
- For high intensity fitness activities (where individuals rapidly inhale and deeply exhale) and/or activities with a wide range of movement (for example, dance fitness, medicine ball or kettlebell exercises), maintain a physical distance of greater than two metres (six feet) between patrons and consider conducting the activity outdoors.
- Consider developing online fitness and/or activity sessions, and offer virtual personal training where possible.
- Encourage patrons to complete their activity and exit the facility without unnecessary delay.
- Organize the facility to allow for a one-way flow of patrons from entrance to exit by using ground markings and barriers. If possible, designate a separate entrance and exit.
- Reconfigure waiting areas by removing tables and chairs to allow more space to physically distance.
- Move machines and equipment to achieve adequate physical distancing between users. If equipment cannot be moved, consider blocking off every other piece of equipment or using a barrier/plexiglas between equipment.
- Encourage patrons to arrive prepared and appropriately attired to begin their activity and limit exposure to others in common areas, such as change rooms before or after their activity.
- Arrange change rooms and washrooms to facilitate physical distancing while in use, including blocking of alternating lockers, showers, sinks, stalls, urinals and other amenities.
- If feasible or when required:
  - Create a booking system that allows people to book a specified time slot to attend the facility. Ensure there is sufficient time between time slots for cleaning and disinfection of the facility and equipment, and to reduce crowding when entering or checking in. Request that patrons arrive no more than five minutes before their time slot.

### Reduce physical contact

- Offer an online or phone registration process. If in-person registration is required, physical distancing is required and pens, PIN pads and self-pay stations must be sanitized before and after each use.
- Consider installing Plexiglas or other transparent barriers where there will be close contact between people.
- Use contactless payment including online payments and tap features, where possible.
- Consider the suspension of towel and other rental services.

- If offered, towels should be clearly separated (clean and used) and appropriately laundered using hot water (60°C to 90°C) and dried well. All other rented materials should be disinfected between uses.
- Limit the use of water fountains to be used only for re-filling water bottles, and not for patrons to drink directly from the spout of the fountain. Encourage patrons to bring their own water bottle and to fill it up at home prior to coming to the facility
- Encourage patrons to bring their own equipment, if possible (for example, yoga mat, ball, racket, towels).
- Remove items that may encourage patrons to stay longer (for example, disposable razors, cotton swabs and blow dryers).
- Remove unnecessary communal items such as candy, magazines and complimentary phone chargers.

## Keep hands and surfaces clean

- Ensure frequent [cleaning and disinfecting](#) throughout the facility, including:
  - Cleaning and disinfecting equipment and class studios between users or at the end of a class and/or game.
  - Cleaning [washrooms](#), water fountains, locker rooms, change rooms and/or showers at least twice a day and when visibly dirty.
- Use products that are [approved by Health Canada](#), with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and follow the manufacturer's instructions for safe use.
- Post [signage](#) to encourage patrons to wash hands frequently for at least 15 seconds with soap and water or alcohol-based (60-90% alcohol) hand rub. Washing with soap and water is preferred, if hands are visibly dirty.
- Provide adequate hand hygiene supplies including alcohol-based (60-90% alcohol) hand rub stations throughout the facility, including entrances and exits.
- Provide disinfectant wipes or disinfectant in a spray bottle and paper towels throughout the facility, and encourage patrons to disinfect equipment and touched surfaces before and after each use.
- Remind patrons about cough and sneeze etiquette and to avoid touching their face. Provide tissues and no-touch waste receptacles.
- Remove all equipment that may be difficult to clean and disinfect (for example, soft equipment such as foam rollers, yoga blocks, yoga mats, straps).
- Refer to [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Public Washrooms](#) for further guidance on safely maintaining washrooms used by patrons.

## Wear non-medical masks

- [Consolidated By-law 47-20](#) and [Ontario's COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open](#) requires individuals to wear a non-medical mask or face covering in certain indoor spaces, unless exempt. Non-medical masks or face coverings should also be worn in other situations when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Masks can be removed when actively engaging in an athletic or fitness activity.
- Train staff on the [proper use](#), removal and disposal of non-medical masks.
- Non-medical masks do not replace the need for physical distancing, proper hand hygiene, coughing and sneezing into a tissue or sleeve and staying home when feeling ill.

## Ensure appropriate ventilation

- Ensure heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are maintained and operating as designed.
- Any changes to ventilation systems should be carried out in consultation with a professional.
- Maximize fresh air intake by opening windows, if possible.

- Limit the use of overhead ceiling fans especially ceiling fans on low ceilings. Avoid the use of pedestal or high-powered fans on/near the floor.

## Employee health and safety

### Organizational Policies

- Use the provincial [screening tool for workplaces](#) to actively screen staff before each shift. If a staff member screens positive and/or if they develop [symptoms](#), direct them to:
  - return or stay home;
  - contact their health care provider or book an appointment at a local [Assessment Centre](#) for testing; and
  - [self-isolate](#) at home.
- Install a transparent, non-permeable physical barrier between the worker and other individuals, if a physical distance of at least two metres cannot be maintained.
- Maintain flexible policies to allow employees and volunteers to stay home to care for a sick family member, or if they need to self-isolate.
- Establish protocols for people who develop COVID-19 symptoms while at the facility, including:
  - Immediately isolating the person from others and asking them to wear a mask.
  - Limiting contact with the person and maintaining a physical distance of two metres (six feet) as much as possible.
  - Wearing appropriate personal protective equipment if providing first aid for someone who may have COVID-19.
    - Following care, first aid providers should [safely](#) remove and discard the mask and gloves and perform proper hand hygiene protocols.
  - If lifesaving efforts are required, follow Heart and Stroke guidelines and using [hands-only CPR](#).
  - Clean and disinfect all surfaces that may have come into contact with the symptomatic person.

### Organizational Operations

- Ensure at least one employee is present when the facility is open for use.
- Stagger shifts or offer flexible work hours and schedules to reduce the number of staff at your facility at any one time.
- Where shifts are established, prevent mixing of staff between shifts.
- Discourage employees and volunteers from congregating, and limit the use of lunch and meeting rooms.
- Maximize fresh air exchange where possible and limit the use of ceiling or pedestal fans in common spaces. If fans are used, minimize air flow that directs current from one person directly towards another.

## Additional resources

- Halton Region Public Health:
  - [Cleaning practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19](#)
  - [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Public Washrooms](#)
  - [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance: Restaurants, Bars, Food Trucks and other Food and Drink Establishments](#) (if food, snacks and/or beverages are offered at your facility )
  - [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance: Recreational Water Facilities](#)
  - [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Managing COVID-19 Cases in the Workplace](#)
- Government of Ontario
  - [Guidance for facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities during COVID-19](#)
  - [Ontario Regulation 364/20](#): Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 (Rules for Areas in Stage 3).

- [Ontario Regulation 263/20](#): Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 (Rules for Areas in Stage 2).
- [Ontario Regulation 82/20](#): Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 (Rules for Areas in Stage 1).
- Fitness Industry Council of Canada:
  - [Framework for Exercise Facilities Operating in a COVID-19 Environment in Ontario](#)

## More information

For more information and updates, visit [halton.ca/COVID19](https://halton.ca/COVID19) or call 311.