

COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Indoor Recreation

October 16, 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. Please note: In Toronto, Peel and Ottawa, indoor gyms and fitness centres are required to be closed at this time.

In Halton, it is recommended that operators temporarily pause indoor fitness classes or consider holding them outdoors, while ensuring a minimum distance of 2 metres (six feet) is maintained between individuals at all times. In addition, it is recommended that all team sports are limited to training only, with no scrimmages or games.

This document does not replace guidance from the Province, including Ontario's [Framework for Reopening our Province](#) and [O. Reg. 364/20](#). Refer to the provincial [Guidance for facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities during COVID-19](#) for further information.

To support safe reopening, operators must also abide by:

- provincial [sector-specific guidelines](#) and [guidance documents](#).
- relevant legislation, including [O. Reg. 364/20](#) and [Halton Region By-law 47-20](#) that require 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 with COVID-19. The respiratory droplets can travel up to two metres (six feet) through coughs, sneezes 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.

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:
 - 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.
 - Keep 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.
- Limit the number of patrons inside each room or area to a number that can maintain a distance of two metres from others within the space. The total number cannot exceed the indoor gathering limit of 50 people per room or area or outdoor limit of 100.
 - Pause indoor fitness classes and if fitness classes are held outdoors, ensure as much physical distancing between patrons as possible (minimum 2 metres).
 - Large areas, such as weight rooms, gymnasiums and sports courts, can be subdivided into one or more separate rooms, separated by a non-permeable barrier to allow each room to have a capacity of 50 patrons at any one time. Patrons should be restricted to one recreational fitness room/area for the duration of their scheduled activity.
 - Indoor gathering limits apply to events that are fully or partially indoors. Indoor and outdoor limits cannot be combined.
 - The limit of 50 persons per room does not apply to amenities that are exempt from gathering limits, such as swimming pools, tennis courts, food establishments, and shooting ranges. Steam rooms and saunas are not yet permitted to open.
- 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 greater than two metres (six feet) between patrons and consider conducting the activity outdoors.
- Limit team sports to training only, with no scrimmages or games at this time.
- 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.

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.
- 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.

- 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.
- Maximize outdoor air intake and minimize air recirculation by limiting 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.
- Ensure fitness facilities are well ventilated with outdoor fresh air; open a window or exterior door.
- Instructors should wear microphones to support physical distancing and reduce the need for shouting or walking around. Patrons should not be permitted to sing along to the music or shout back at the instructor.
- Consider developing online fitness and/or activity sessions, and offer virtual personal training where possible.

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

- [Halton Region By-law 47-20](#) requires individuals to wear a non-medical mask or face covering in certain indoor spaces. Non-medical masks or face coverings should also be worn in other situations when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Some individuals are exempt from [Halton Region By-law 47-20](#), and are not required to provide proof of exemption. Not all exemptions are visible. Please be kind and supportive to those who may be exempt from wearing a mask or face covering.
- Exemptions include employees who can maintain a physical distance of two metres from one another and are located within an area designated for employees and not for public access.
- 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.

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

- At least one employee must be 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](#)
- Fitness Industry Council of Canada:
 - [Framework for Exercise Facilities Operating in a COVID-19 Environment in Ontario](#)
- Province of Ontario:
 - [Emergency Orders](#)

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