

COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Recreational Water Facilities

Updated February 22, 2020

This document provides guidance for owners and operators of public swimming pools, spas, wading pools and splash pads in Halton region to ensure public safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, steam rooms, saunas and waterparks are not permitted to open.

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

Owners and operators are also responsible for ensuring compliance with the requirements of [Ontario Regulation 565: Public Pools](#), [Halton Region By-law 47-20](#), and other applicable legislation, including the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#).

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. Current evidence does not suggest that COVID-19 can be spread through water in recreational water facilities.

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, Protect, Restrict, Control and Lockdown) 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), [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 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.

Key Requirements for Recreational Water Facilities

First Level: PREVENT

- Facilities are required to limit the number of persons permitted in the facility such that every member of the public is able to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres (six feet) from every other person in the facility.
- Non-medical masks or face coverings are required by all staff and patrons except when actively engaging in physical activity.
- All staff must be actively screened before coming to work using the online [COVID-19 Worker and Employee Screening](#) or [COVID-19 Screening Tool for Businesses and Organizations \(Screening Workers\)](#).
- All businesses and organizations must post signs at all entrances that inform individuals on how to screen themselves for COVID-19 symptoms using [COVID-19 Signage Questions for Businesses and Organizations](#)

- A [safety plan](#) is available on request and posted in a conspicuous location.

Second Level: PROTECT

Measures from the previous level and:

- Keep a log of the people who enter the premises to assist with contact tracing if needed. Include name, contact number or email and date in the log. Keep logs for 30 days before destroying. The log must comply with privacy requirements and be kept confidential.

Third Level: RESTRICT

Measures from the previous levels and:

- Sports and recreational fitness facilities are required to screen all patrons before they enter, in accordance with [instructions issued by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health](#).
- No spectators are permitted to be in the facility, with the exception of a parent or guardian accompanying a child under the age of 18 years who is engaged in activities in the facility.

Fourth Level: CONTROL

Measures from the previous levels and:

- Swimming lessons and aquatic fitness classes are considered in-person teaching and instruction and are subject to the in-person teaching and instruction limits under [O. Reg. 263/20](#).

Lockdown

Public pools are closed.

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](#).

Limit capacity

Facilities are required to limit the number of persons permitted in the facility such that every member of the public is able to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres (six feet) from every other person in the facility.

Consider the following suggestions to meet this requirement:

- Set a capacity limit for the number of staff, bathers, and spectators allowed in the facility at any given time.
 - The limit should be based on the layout and available space within the facility that will ensure ease of movement while maintaining a physical distance of two metres (six feet) from others.
 - Particular attention should be paid to spas (if permitted to open), as their smaller size makes physical distancing more challenging.
- Post signage at the entrance stating of the maximum number of bathers and spectators permitted at any one time.
- Monitor to ensure adherence to the capacity limit.
- Capacity limit requirements that apply to the entire facility (i.e., facilities that are not community centres or multi-use facilities) must be considered. Refer to [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Sports and Recreational Fitness](#).

Indoor swimming lessons and aquatic fitness classes:

- Under the Red (Control) level, a maximum of 10 students are permitted in all classes/lessons, provided a physical distance of at least two metres (six feet) can be maintained.

Screen for COVID-19 symptoms

- All businesses and organizations must post signs at all entrances that inform individuals on how to screen themselves for COVID-19 symptoms using [COVID-19 Signage Questions for Businesses and Organizations](#)
- If feasible or required (see Provincial Framework table above):
 - Staff must be actively screened before coming to work using the online [COVID-19 Worker and Employee Screening](#) or [COVID-19 Screening Tool for Businesses and Organizations \(Screening Workers\)](#).
 - Patrons should be actively screened before entering the premises using the [COVID-19 Screening Tool for Businesses and Organizations \(Screening Patrons\)](#).
- If a staff member or patron answers “yes” to a screening question and/or they develop [symptoms](#), direct them to:
 - stay home or return home to [self-isolate](#); and
 - contact their health care provider or book an appointment at a local [Assessment Centre](#) for testing.
- Workers conducting screening should be behind a physical barrier or stand at least two metres (six feet) from others. If this is not possible, workers should wear a surgical/procedure mask and eye protection.
- Maintain a log of the people who enter the premises to assist with contact tracing if needed. Include name, contact number or email and date in the log. Keep logs for 30 days before destroying. The log must comply with privacy requirements and be kept confidential
- Alcohol-based (60-90% alcohol) hand rub, tissue, and a lined no-touch waste basket or bin should also be available.

Maximize physical distancing

- A physical distance of at least two metres (six feet) must be maintained at all times by all people who are not from the same household. Encourage patrons to complete their activity and exit the facility without unnecessary delay.
- Post [physical distance](#) signs, and 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.
- 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:
 - minimum space of 5 m² per person recommended for change rooms
 - encourage use of deck shower, if available

Note: change rooms, showers and washrooms used for the pool must be available for use of the bathers.
- 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.
- Increase supervision to ensure physical distancing and proper flow of traffic. This should not be carried out by an on-duty lifeguard.
- Disable water features to prevent close proximity of users.
- Ensure physical distancing of at least two metres (six feet) at diving board and waterslide lines, including markers on the floor or walls. If lines for these features interfere with bather flow on the deck, consider not permitting their use.
- Do not allow access to structures that cannot be easily cleaned (e.g. rope swings).

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.
 - encourage contactless payment including online payments and tap features, where possible, and have the bather or a household member apply bracelets.
- Consider installing plexiglass or other transparent barriers where there will be close contact between people.
- Where possible, have a parent or caregiver who is in the swimmer's household assist the swimmer in the water, instead of the instructor.
- 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 shared equipment, e.g. pool toys.
- 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
- Remove unnecessary communal items such as candy, magazines and complimentary phone chargers.

Keep hands and surfaces clean

- In addition to routine cleaning, increase the frequency of [cleaning and disinfection](#) of high-touch surfaces and common or share spaces.
 - Clean and disinfect [washrooms](#), change rooms and showers at least twice a day and when visibly dirty.
 - Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces (e.g. drinking water fountains, faucets, handles, doorknobs, hand rails, counters, keypads, chemistry test kits, pump room levers) 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.
- Provide adequate hand hygiene supplies including alcohol-based (60-90% alcohol) hand rub stations throughout the facility, including entrances and exits.
- 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.
- Rescue equipment (e.g. throwing aids, reaching poles) and shared equipment (e.g. lifejackets, flutter boards, clip boards) should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- Remind bathers about cough and sneeze etiquette and to avoid touching their face. Provide tissues and no-touch waste receptacles.

Water disinfection

- Proper operation and maintenance of the water filtration and disinfection systems (i.e., with chlorine or bromine) should remove or inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Disinfectant levels must be maintained, where required, under [Ontario Regulation 565 – Public Pools](#).

Wear non-medical masks

- [Halton Region By-law 47-20](#) and [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 and face coverings must be worn on the recreational water facility deck and in other areas of the facility.

- Masks may be removed when actively engaging in an athletic or fitness activity; while in the pool, for example, or as necessary for health and safety purposes.
- Lifeguards are required to wear a mask or face covering while on active duty with the exception of when seated in an elevated lifeguard station (if station provides physical distancing of at least two metres from patrons) and responding to an emergency situation.
- Train staff on the [proper use](#), removal and disposal of non-medical masks.
- Non-medical masks do not replace other important public health measures, such as 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 or doors, unless doing so poses a safety risk.
- 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

- Use the Province's [Employee/Worker Screening Tool](#) to 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.
- Staff should be familiar with the symptoms of COVID-19 and trained on COVID-19 policies and procedures.
- Educate staff on public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including physical distancing, proper hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and cleaning and disinfection.
- If a staff member is required to come within two metres (six feet) of another person who is not wearing a mask in an indoor area and is not separated by a plexiglass or other impermeable barrier, they should wear appropriate personal protective equipment. At a minimum, a surgical/procedure (medical) mask and eye protection should be worn.
- Train staff on the proper use of personal protective equipment, as appropriate.
- Maintain flexible policies to allow people to stay home to care for a sick family member or self-isolate if required.
- Where shifts are established, prevent mixing of staff between shifts.
- Discourage staff from gathering together in office, lunch and common areas.
- Ensure procedures are in place for what to do if a staff member or visitor experiences [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, that include:
 - 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.
 - Cleaning and disinfecting all surfaces that may have come into contact with the symptomatic person.
- Follow steps outlined in [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Managing COVID-19 Cases in the Workplace](#) in the event that a staff member tests positive for COVID-19.

Additional resources



- Halton Region Public Health:
 - [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Public Washrooms](#)
 - [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Sports and Recreational Fitness](#)
 - [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Managing COVID-19 Cases in the Workplace](#)
 - [Mental Health Resources and Supports](#)
- Province of Ontario:
 - [Guidance for facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities during COVID-19](#)
 - [Ontario Regulation 364/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 3](#)
 - [Ontario Regulation 263/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 2](#)
 - [Ontario Regulation 82/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 1](#)
- Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development:
 - [Resources to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace](#)
- Lifesaving Society of Canada:
 - [Guide to Reopening Pools and Waterfronts](#)
- Workplace Safety & Prevention Services:
 - [Psychological Safety Resources for Leaders During COVID-19](#)

More information

For more information and updates, visit halton.ca/COVID19 or call 311. For specific questions about COVID-19 provincial regulations, please contact the **Stop the Spread Business Information Line** at 1-888-444-3659.