

COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Recreational Water Facilities

Last Updated: July 23, 2020

This document provides guidance for owners and operators of public swimming pools, spas, wading pools and splash pads, to ensure public safety as these facilities reopen throughout Halton region. At this time, steam rooms, saunas and waterparks are not permitted to open. This document does not replace guidance from the Province, and is subject to the staged and regional approach to reopening in the [Framework for Reopening our Province](#).

Owners and operators who choose to re-open their facility when permitted to do so, are responsible for ensuring measures are in place to keep staff and visitors safe from COVID-19, while ensuring compliance with the requirements of [Ontario Regulation 565: Public Pools](#), and other applicable legislation, including the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#).

It is strongly recommended that each facility have a plan to implement public health guidance for the protection of workers and the public. The Government of Ontario has released [resources](#) for workplaces, and a guide on developing a [workplace safety plan](#). The plan should be reviewed with staff and updated as new guidance is provided, policies and procedures are updated, and additional amenities are permitted to open.

Screening for COVID-19

Screen staff and visitors for COVID-19 symptoms:

- At a minimum, post signage ([example](#)) at the facility entrance to help the public and staff identify if they have COVID-19 symptoms before they enter. Consider requesting completion of the [Self-Assessment Tool](#) before arrival.
- Communicate to staff and visitors that they may not enter the facility if they suspect they have COVID-19 [symptoms](#) or may have been exposed to COVID-19, and to self-isolate at home.

Visitor education

- Communicate public health measures in place at the facility (e.g., website, letter to resident) and post signage at appropriate locations in the facility to remind staff and visitors to:
 - stay home if feeling unwell
 - maintain physical distance of two metres (six feet) from others not in your household, and supervise children to ensure proper physical distancing
 - practice proper [hand hygiene](#)
 - sneeze and cough into your sleeve
 - avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Bathers can be encouraged to shower at home to reduce circulation in the change room, bring their own equipment (e.g. towels, water bottles, goggles, etc.), and not share equipment with others not in their household.
- Splash pad visitors can also be encouraged to bring their own alcohol-based hand rub.

Physical distancing

- Implement measures to ensure physical distancing of two metres (six feet) throughout the facility (e.g., at the entrance, staff office, in the pool and on the deck, spectator and resting areas, change room, showers, toilet areas). Consider the following:
 - timed appointment or timed entry
 - reduced bather load (Lifesaving Society recommends 25 - 50 % max bather load)
 - particular attention should be paid to spas, as their smaller size makes physical distancing more challenging
 - reduced aquatic activity enrolment, such as fitness classes and swim lessons, recreation and lane swim
 - other household members can assist swimmers with physical contact
 - one entry point and a separate exit, one-way traffic flow throughout the facility
 - physical barriers (e.g. Plexiglas divider for reception staff)
 - touchless transactions, e.g., for entry, payment, self-applied bracelets
 - spacing or removal of furniture
 - floor markings to indicate two metre distances and/or direction of traffic flow
 - reduced capacity in change rooms, toilet facilities, showers, resting areas, consider:
 - use of signs, closing some of the stalls
 - minimum space of 5 m² per person recommended for change rooms
 - encourage use of deck shower, if available

Note: if change rooms, showers and toilet facilities are provided for the pool, they must be available for use of the bathers.

 - limit number of staff in small work spaces (e.g., in office)
 - increase supervision to ensure physical distancing and proper flow of traffic – should not be carried out by an on-duty lifeguard
 - disable water features to prevent close proximity of users
 - at splash pad, program water features to stay activated for longer periods, and/or encourage bathers to activate splash pad features using elbows instead of hands- Policies are in place to ensure physical distancing of 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).

Hand hygiene

- Ensure hand wash sinks are supplied with hot and cold running water, liquid soap in a dispenser and paper towels.
- Provide alcohol-based (60% - 90% alcohol) hand rub at the entrance and throughout the facility, where possible.

Cleaning and disinfection

- In addition to routine cleaning and disinfection protocols, [clean and disinfect](#) high touch surfaces (e.g. drinking water fountains, faucets, handles, doorknobs, hand rails, toilet handles, counters, keypads, chemistry test kits, pump room levers, tables) at least twice a day and when visibly dirty.
- Use disinfectants that are [approved by Health Canada](#), with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and follow the manufacturer's instructions for safe use.

- Limit use of pool toys and other shared equipment, where possible. Ensure that any items or equipment that are used can be easily cleaned and disinfected.

Water disinfection

- COVID-19 is largely transmitted through respiratory droplets that can spread up to two metres (six feet). Current evidence does not suggest that COVID-19 can be spread through water in recreational water facilities.
- 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](#).

Occupational health and safety

- Staff should be familiar with the symptoms of COVID-19 and trained on COVID-19 policies and procedures.
- Ensure procedures are in place for what to do if a staff member or visitor experiences [symptoms](#) of COVID-19.
- 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.
- Maintain flexible policies to allow people to stay home to care for a sick family member or self-isolate if required.

Wear non-medical masks

- [Halton Region By-law 47-20](#) requires individuals five years of age and over 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.
- Masks and face coverings may be removed when actively engaging in an athletic or fitness activity.
- Lifeguards are not required to wear a mask or face covering while on active duty. However, while on duty and not responding to an emergency situation, lifeguards must maintain a two metre distance at all times from patrons and other staff.
- 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.

Building water systems

- Ensure water systems are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize public health risk of disease associated with stagnant water.

Additional resources

- Halton Region Public Health halton.ca/COVID-19
- Halton Region Public Health [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Public Washrooms, Portable Toilets and Drinking Water Fountains](#)
- Lifesaving Society Guidance Document: [Guide to Reopening Pools and Waterfronts](#)
- Province of Ontario: [Emergency Orders](#)
- Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development: [Safety Guidelines and Posters](#)
- Canadian Water and Wastewater Association (CWWA) [Fact Sheet for Safely Re-opening Buildings](#)