



## COVID-19 Guidance for Recreational Water Facilities

*Public Pools, Spas, Wading pools, Water slides & Splash Pads*

Updated August 26, 2020

### Introduction

As the COVID-19 pandemic evolves, the Ontario Government has transitioned into the recovery phase with the new [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020, S.O. 2020, c. 17](#). The Provincial Government has announced that Ottawa is included in [Reopening our Province – Stage 3](#).

This document provides guidance for the re-opening of public pools, spas, splash pads, and wading pools in the City of Ottawa. Owners/operators must notify Ottawa Public Health of their intention to re-open their facility. A progressive, assessment-based approach should be considered when planning the re-opening of a recreational water facility, in accordance with this guidance and [R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 565: PUBLIC POOLS](#).

**This guidance is subject to change as new information is received or Provincial regulations are changed. Please refer to [OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Coronavirus](#) for the most recent information.**

### What is COVID-19?

The 2019 Novel Coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, is known to cause infection in the respiratory system. COVID-19 spreads from person-to-person through direct contact or over short distances by droplets through coughing or sneezing. A person may also get COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching their mouth, nose, or possibly eyes. COVID-19 symptoms can include, fever, new or worsening cough, pneumonia, difficulty breathing, severe chest pain, sore throat, nasal congestion (not related to seasonal allergies), diarrhea, abdominal pain and/or difficulty breathing. For a full list of the current symptoms visit [Ontario.ca](#). Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19, although carriers may show no symptoms. OPH encourages all organizations and agencies to implement their own internal policies for the protection of staff, volunteers, and clients. If you think you have COVID-19 symptoms or have been in close contact with someone who has it, take the [COVID-19](#)



[self assessment](#) to get a recommendation on what to do next.

### **Support and encourage behaviours to reduce the spread of germs**

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Keep a two metre/six feet distance from others.
- Limit the number of people you come into close contact with.
- Wash your hands often and avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Wear a cloth (non-medical) mask, a disposable mask or other face covering when you are in a public setting and when physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

### **The City of Ottawa [Temporary Mask By-law \(2020-186\)](#), applies to indoor aquatic facilities as follows:**

- Any person who enters or remains in an Enclosed Public Space must wear a mask in a manner that covers their mouth, nose, and chin.
- Exemptions include children under two years of age, individuals with a medical condition on that prevents them from wearing a mask, and individuals who cannot put on or remove their mask without assistance, and lifeguards working in indoor pools. No proof of exemption is required.
- Although not required, it is recommended that staff wear a mask while in areas of the premises that are not designated for public access if they may be in contact with other staff in these areas
- Staff are not required to wear a mask while within or behind a physical barrier (including, but not limited to a plexiglass barrier) that separates them from the public
- All persons who are not exempt are required to wear a cloth (non-medical) mask, a disposable mask, or other face covering when indoors **except** when:
  - actively engaging in an athletic or fitness activity including water-based activities,
  - consuming food or drink, or



- required to for an emergency or medical purpose.

\* if an aquatic instructor can safely wear a mask without it becoming wet or damaged, they are encouraged to do so. They should be trained on removing the mask safely and quickly in the event they need to do so.

- As an operator of an enclosed public space you must:
- ensure that every person who is not wearing a mask while in the premises is provided with a verbal reminder following entry. No person is required to provide proof of exemption.
- post at every public entrance/exit signage that states all persons entering the premises must wear a mask under the city of Ottawa By-law 2020-186.
- ensure alcohol-based hand rub is available at all public entrances/exits.

**Facilities that choose to re-open are encouraged to implement the following recommendations to limit the spread of COVID-19:**

**Staff and Visitor Safety**

- Prior to arrival, all staff and visitors should complete the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 [Self-Assessment Tool](#) to determine whether they can participate in community-based activities.
- The owner/operator, or another person appointed for that purpose, should be present and checking to ensure adherence to protocols
- [Screening](#) employees for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 is critical. All measures must be taken to ensure employees are symptom free before interacting with clients and colleagues.
- Ensure that active screening of each employee occurs before each shift.
- Do not allow employees who are sick to come to work. If employees are sick, they should go home and stay at home. They should also be advised to complete the [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#), contact their primary health provider and/or get tested.
- Documentation of visitor names and contact information is highly recommended to allow contact tracing in the event of an outbreak.
- Staff and visitors exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g. fever, cough or difficulty breathing; for a complete list of symptoms click [here](#)) must not enter the facility and return home immediately to complete the COVID-19 Self-Assessment for further guidance.
- [Post signage](#) at the facility entrance identifying COVID-19 symptoms, warnings for



high risk individuals and protocols to follow while on site (distancing, flow of traffic, hygiene etiquette etc.).

- Staff and visitors should be reminded to practice [hand hygiene](#) and [respiratory etiquette](#).
- [Hand sanitizing stations](#) should be made available for use and hand hygiene should be performed before and after entering the pool area
- For facilities in residential settings (apartment, condominium, and hotel pools etc.) pool users may be encouraged to come prepared to swim including having a shower with warm soapy water in their unit.
- Where showers and change rooms are available to users, they should be encouraged to be efficient and limit time in these common areas. Capacity in these spaces should be limited to allow physical distancing.
- Facilities are encouraged to consider the use of any on or near deck showers to avoid crowding within their shower areas.
- Any washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms, showers or similar amenities made available to the public are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.
- Limit activity in change rooms.
- Facilities equipped with a shower on or near the pool deck should advocate its use in order to avoid crowding in enclosed shower and change areas

### Physical Distancing Measures

- Recreational water facilities that choose to re-open must implement measures to ensure that members of the public are always able to maintain a separation of at least two meters (though a larger distance is preferred) between each other while on site. Members of the same household may come within two metres of one another.
- Capacity limits should be established and enforced to ensure that staff and patrons from separate households can physically distance by at least 2 metres at all times.
  - Capacity limits should account for site specific factors including considerations such as the facility layout, whether the facility is indoors or outdoors, and planned activities such as lane swimming.
  - It is recommended that the pool, spa, splash pad, spray pad or wading pool comply with applicable physical distancing requirements by,
    - Operating with a reduced resting area, capacity or aquatic activity enrolment, or



- Operating by appointment or timed entry
- Facilities shall ensure that the total number of bathers permitted at any instant on the deck and in the pool does not exceed the maximum bather load as determined by [R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 565: PUBLIC POOLS](#) and must not exceed capacity limits set by the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020, S.O. 2020, c. 17](#) O. Reg 364/20.
- Facility and activity assessments should be completed to identify high traffic areas and measures put in place to facilitate a one-way traffic method.
- Post signs at the entrance and in high traffic areas where maintaining two metres distance may be challenging. Example [posters](#).
- Equipment which is provided for the use of members of the public must be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as needed to maintain a sanitary condition (water slides, diving boards, or other climbing structures).
- In areas where there may be a queue (renting equipment etc.), place distance markings every two meters to give visitors a visual queue for physical distancing. If line-ups interfere with bather traffic on the deck or otherwise, the equipment should be taken out of use.
- Any equipment that is rented to, provided to, or provided for the use of members of the public must be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition and in between users. Seating and resting areas should be reduced. Provided seating should be arranged to maintain a two-meter distance in all directions and disinfected between uses.
- A progressive approach for the introduction of facility activities is encouraged to limit the risk of community transmission.

### **Aquatic Instruction**

- Aquatic activities such as fitness classes and swim lessons must be in line with physical distancing measures:
- Lessons should be organized to allow for physical distancing wherever possible
- Close contact between instructors and participants in programs is discouraged but allowed where it is necessary for instructional or safety purposes.
- Consider operating lessons for young children and other weak swimmers, who would normally require support or physical feedback in the water, in a modified fashion. This may include having a household contact of the participant assist them in the water (as is usually done for infant and toddler lessons).
- There is evidence that projecting one's voice may increase the range of respiratory droplets.



Singing and shouting should be limited during aquatic instruction.

## Cleaning & Disinfecting

- All change rooms and showers will be available to the public, and operators must adequately clean and disinfect the facilities at a minimum twice per day or as needed.
- Common cleaners and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19. Hand sanitizers and environmental disinfectants must be [approved by Health Canada](#). These can be identified by having an eight-digit Drug Identification Number (DIN) and must be used according to the manufacturer's instructions. Expired products must not be used and should be discarded appropriately.
- In addition to routine cleaning, facilities should identify all frequently touched surfaces and increase their cleaning frequency. This may include handrails, doorknobs, sink and toilet handles, light switches, deck furniture and counter tops. This should also include frequently touched surfaces and equipment in staff-only areas (e.g. keyboards and mice rescue equipment, lifeguard chair railings, chemistry test kit, pump room levers, pens, tables)
  - Items typically shared between staff, such as small first aid kits, may be assigned to specific staff or placed in an area that makes them readily accessible in an emergency without requiring them to be handled frequently (i.e. place a fanny-pack with gloves, gauze, and a pocket mask at each lifeguard station rather than having them worn by rotating lifeguards). Damp cleaning methods such as wet cloths and mops should be used to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least two times a day, or more frequently if possible.
- Surfaces that are in contact (i.e., underwater) with adequately treated pool water do not require enhanced disinfection. Sharing equipment, water toys, etc. is not recommended. In cases where equipment needs to be shared, proper cleaning and disinfection must occur between users.
- Equipment and toys that are not smooth and easy-to-clean should be removed from use. This may include rope swings, fabric chair cushions etc.
- For more information on cleaning and disinfecting in public settings visit Public Health Ontario's [guidance document](#).



- COVID-19 is primarily transmitted through respiratory droplets that can travel up to two meters. There is currently no evidence that the virus is transmitted through water but may occur through contact with a contaminated surface and/or being less than two meters from a person who is carrying the virus.
- “Recreational water facilities that are properly operated, maintained, and disinfected should remove or inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19”. Public facilities in the City of Ottawa must be operated in accordance with [Ontario Regulation 565/90 Public Pools](#).

### **Staff Training & Personal Protective Equipment**

- Training plans should include COVID-19 specific protocols for administrative, janitorial, and lifeguard duties on-site.
- Staff should be supplied with their own personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as personal first aid equipment as required (e.g.: pocket masks, hand sanitizer)
- Staff are encouraged to utilize non-medical masks during operational hours. Masks should not be worn when engaged in in-water activity.
- Staff must assess PPE requirements based on activities being performed. Refer to Appendix P of the [Lifesaving Societies guidance document](#) for details.

### **It is important to recognize that the COVID-19 situation is changing constantly.**

Please visit [OttawaPublicHealth.ca/CoronaVirus](https://ottawapublichealth.ca/coronavirus) to stay up to date on the latest information including signage, screening tools, and general information. To speak with a Public Health Inspector please contact 613-580-6744

### **Additional Resources:**

[Lifesaving Society’s guidelines for reopening aquatic facilities](#)

[DIN-registered disinfectants approved by Health Canada](#)

[Public Health Ontario Guidelines on Cleaning and Disinfecting for Public Settings](#)

[Multilingual Resources for COVID-19](#)

[ONTARIO REGULATION 364/20](#)

[R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 565: PUBLIC POOLS](#)