COVID-19 Guidance for Fitness Facilities in Multi-unit Dwellings

RESTRICT LEVEL

This document provides public health information, guidance and recommendation on prevention of COVID-19 as issued by Ottawa Public Health and should not be considered a regulatory document. The information included here is intended for readers in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. For information on regulatory restrictions in place for the regions of Ontario and the City of Ottawa, please see the Government of Ontario response framework and the City of Ottawa Provincial and City Rules.

The province’s COVID-19 Response Framework has five levels of public health measures Prevent, Protect, Restrict, Control and Lockdown. This guidance document describes the requirements that fitness centres used by residents within multi-unit dwellings must comply with under the Reopening Ontario Act and City of Ottawa specific enhanced measures at a Restrict Level.

Board members, owners and management companies have a responsibility to assess the risks associated with their facility and operations, and their ability to mitigate these risks. They are responsible for implementing measures to reduce the risk of infection among all those who participate in their activities (e.g. staff, residents, volunteers, attendees).

All residents have the responsibility to assess the risks for themselves, their family and those associated with their activity of choice and their ability to mitigate these risks. They are responsible for both implementing measures to reduce the risk of infection and following all measures in place by owners and operators of facilities and/or the organization’s safety plan.
Closures (S. 22 under the Health Protection and Promotion Act; Reopening Ontario Act)

- Indoor group fitness and exercise classes are permitted following capacity limits.
- Activities likely to result in individuals coming within two metres of each other are not permitted.
- Patrons may only be in the facility for 90 minutes unless engaged in sport or activity.
- Areas with weights and exercise equipment and in classes increase spacing to 3 metres between patrons.
- Masks required in all common areas including fitness centres but with the exception for when exercising.
- Limit volume of music to be low enough that a normal conversation is possible.
- Saunas, steam rooms remain closed.

Capacity limits

Capacity and gathering limits are impacted by the level, and regulations may change, refer to the provincial regulation for the most current information to ensure you are compliant.

Gathering Limits
- 50 people indoors/100 people outdoors
- 50 people per facility

Capacity
- 10 people indoors (classes)
- 25 people outdoors (classes)

The total number of patrons permitted at the facility participating in all classes and organized programs/activities must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from other people, and in any event cannot exceed 10 people.

Review the Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace to plan and implement COVIDWise protocols to keep staff and residents safer.
Practice physical distancing

- **Physical distancing** of at least three metres is required in areas with weights and exercise machines, and exercise/fitness classes. Physical distancing of at least two metres/six feet is required in all other areas.
- Plan and modify the layout of your facility to ensure enough space is provided for staff and customers to maintain physical distancing.

Calculate capacity

Calculate the maximum number of people permitted in the facility that allows for physical distancing as noted above, or complies with provincial gathering limits, whichever is less.

- It is the responsibility of the owners and operators to determine the capacity specific to the space or venue based on the layout of the venue, equipment or structural obstacles, flow of traffic, activity requirements and achieving the required physical distancing.
- Post occupancy limits within each space, including washrooms, locker rooms, and fitness rooms.

Limit capacity

Limit the number of people based on calculations above.

- Review and coordinate the use of all amenities to ensure physical distancing can be maintained in common areas.

Modify the space

Modify and arrange site/floor plan to maintain physical distancing and reduce contact.

- Assign spaces for organized activities (e.g. by marking circles or squares on the floor to designate where each person should exercise).
- Design traffic flow that encourages one-way movement with prominent signage and/or floor markings.
- Increase floor marking and signage to allow people to find rooms and amenities more easily.
- Ensure enough space for people in high traffic areas and places where people may gather.
- Identify areas where crowding and bottlenecks are common, such as lobbies, washrooms, and use staff or barriers to redirect people who may gather in these areas.
Screening & Contact Documentation

- Post signage at the facility entrance for individuals to self-screen.
- Stay home if feeling unwell or if you are screened out using the self-assessment.
- Ensure that all participant information is recorded daily, including: the clients’ full name, contact information, date, their intended activity and areas of facility they will be accessing. This information will assist contact tracing in the event of any COVID-19 cases.
  - Participant information can be obtained by using a sign-up sheet posted on the exterior of the fitness centre

Use of masks

- All staff and patrons must wear a mask or face covering in all enclosed common areas of a condominium or multi-unit residential building, as per City of Ottawa bylaw and O. Reg. 364/20.
- Masks must be worn by patrons when in facilities until physical activity begins (in the lobby, changerooms etc.). The use of masks is recommended for any exercise within the gym that does not significantly increase your heart rate and breathing. Those who can comfortably exercise with masks on should do so. Building management, owners and operators must develop a policy and protocols on the wearing of masks, as per City of Ottawa bylaw, and train staff on the policy and protocols. More information on proper mask use and recommended protocols is available on Ottawa Public Health’s COVID masks webpage

Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- A surgical/procedure (medical) mask and eye protection must be used by workers when they are unable to maintain physical distance of at least two metres from any unmasked individuals where a physical barrier is not present.
- The employer must determine what PPE is required and ensure that it is worn by workers.
- Educate staff on the proper use and disposal of masks and PPE.
Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems

- Ensure the HVAC system(s) are properly maintained.
- Increase outdoor air-exchange by:
  - maximizing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system settings, or
  - open windows and doors, if it is safe to do so.
- Use the highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the HVAC system.
- Keep seating and activities away from air vents and areas with high airflow.
- Do not obstruct HVAC inlets and outlets.
- When using ceiling fans, use an upward airflow rotation.
- If portable fans are used, position fan with an upward movement to avoid blowing of air across people and surfaces.
- There is no evidence the use of portable air purifiers will prevent the spread of COVID-19. If used, follow the manufacturer’s directions to decide where best to place the device. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions on maintenance.
- For more information, review the COVID-19: Transmission, Aerosols and Ventilation fact sheet.

Enhance cleaning and disinfection

- Any equipment must be cleaned and disinfected between each use.
  - Establish and post clear policies requiring people to wipe down equipment before and after every use.
  - Provide adequate supplies and garbage bins for disposing used materials.
  - Encourage residents to bring their own gear for personal use, when practical and possible (e.g. helmet, racquets, water bottle, towels).
- Do not use equipment or fixed structures that cannot be cleaned between each use.
- Assign staff to complete environmental cleaning and disinfection duties.
- Ensure frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces and objects in staff and public areas (e.g. doorknobs, stereos, water re-fill stations, railings) at least twice a day and when visibly dirty.
  - Review Public Health Ontario’s Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings fact sheet.
  - Refer to Health Canada’s list of hard surface disinfectants for use against COVID-19.
- Ensure washrooms, hand sinks and water fountains are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary environment.
  - Water fountains should only be used to re-fill water bottles. Do not allow individuals to drink directly from them.
- Provide waste receptacles lined with a plastic bag, and empty as often as necessary.
Modify & Adapt

Programming

- If offering classes, please refer to the Sport and Recreation guidelines.
- Consider closing or restricting access to non-essential common areas if applicable (e.g. merchandise kiosks, concession stands, communal lounges).
- Music played in the facility cannot exceed the decibel level at which normal conversation is possible.

Increase public health awareness

- Provide information to staff and customers about facility operations (e.g. public health measures, available amenities) through different communication platforms (e.g. web, email social media).
- Encourage staff and customers to download the COVID Alert app so they can be notified directly if they have been in close contact with someone who was contagious with COVID-19.
- Download information and display posters in high visibility areas in your setting to promote messages about how to stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. All COVID Wise signage from OPH available at www.OttawaPublicHealth.ca/WorkplaceCOVID19.

Other resources

- Ontario Self-Assessment
- Safety Planning
- COVIDWise Signage
- Ontario Recreation Facilities Association - Recreation Facility Reopening COVID-19

Use of the facility for other purposes, such as child care, day camps or as a meeting or event space, must comply with all applicable laws, guidelines or the provincial Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH) advice with respect to that use.

More information

For more information, visit our website at ottapublichealth.ca/WorkplaceCOVID19
References

