COVID-19 Guidance for Sports & Recreational Fitness Facilities

RErestrict 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 gymnasiaums, health clubs, community centres, multi-purpose facilities, arenas, exercise studios, yoga and dance studios and other fitness facilities must comply with under the Reopening Ontario Act and City of Ottawa specific enhanced measures at a Restrict Level.

Facilities operated by a sports team in a professional league, and persons training for Olympic/Paralympic Games are beyond the scope of this document. See Provincial Orders O. Reg. 263/20 for more information. Information for pools, splash pads, spray pads and wading pools can be found here.

Owners and operators of gyms, fitness studios and sports facilities 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, volunteers, attendees).

Sport organizations have the responsibility to assess the risks associated with sport and operations, and their ability to mitigate the risks. They are responsible for implementing and adhering to measures to reduce the risk of infection among all those who participate in their activities (athletes, families, spectators, volunteers, coaches and referees).

All participants in sporting, recreation or fitness activities 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.
- Team or individual sports must be modified to have no physical contact.
- Activities likely to result in individuals coming within two metres of each other are not permitted.
- Spectators are not permitted.
  - Exception: a person under the age of 18 years who is engaged in activities in the facility may be accompanied by one parent or guardian.
- 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
- Face coverings required except when exercising
- Limit volume of music to be low enough that a normal conversation is possible.
  - This is to prevent shouting by instructors and public
- Saunas, steam rooms, bath houses and oxygen bars 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
- No spectators (exemption for parent/guardian supervision of child(ren))

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

Sport
- 50 per league
- No spectators (exemption for parent/guardian supervision of children)

Review the Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace to plan and implement COVID Wise protocols to keep staff and customers 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.
- Designate and manage entry and exit points to control the number of people entering the facility and each space within. If the maximum number of people is reached, allow one person in for every person that leaves.
  - Stagger arrivals and departures, where possible, to reduce congestion at points of entrance and exit and in common areas.
- Review and coordinate the use of all amenities to ensure physical distancing can be maintained in common areas if the facility is a community centre, multi-purpose facility, or other complex with multiple uses.

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.
Manage lines & Avoid Congregation

Monitor and manage lines within and outside the facility.

- Post physical distancing signs at all entrances, service desks or otherwise.
- Place visual markers spaced two metres/six feet apart (e.g. tape on the floor, pylons, signs) to encourage physical distancing and guide customers.
- Encourage the use of masks for guests waiting/lining-up outside.
- Assign staff to monitor lines and to make public announcements reminding customers to keep two metres/six feet apart.

Screening & Contact Documentation

- Any person participating in a sport or activity – including staff, volunteers, and participants – should be directed to perform a COVID-19 Self-Assessment prior to arrival.
- 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.
  - Facility operators can work with groups, associations, clubs and coaches to facilitate this process.
- Encourage participants to track all activities on a calendar. This will help with contact tracing (if needed).

Use of masks

- All staff and patrons must wear a mask or face covering indoors, 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.
- Masks or face coverings are strongly recommended outdoors when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Facility 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 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.
- Surgical/procedural masks and eye protection must be worn by all workers in sport or recreational fitness rooms or areas.
- 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 customers 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.
- Consider suspending towel service.

Modify & Adapt

Programming

- Consider alternative methods of service (e.g. virtual classes).
- Where possible, hold classes and activities outdoors instead of indoors.
- Cancel activities where distances or other appropriate controls cannot be implemented.
- Offer more classes/activities at a reduced capacity rather than hosting a single large class/activity.
- Allow enough time between classes/activities to allow safe and distanced exit and entry, and sufficient environmental cleaning in between.
- Consider closing or restricting access to non-essential common areas (e.g. merchandise kiosks, concession stands, communal lounges).
- Any instruction given to members of the public who are engaged in a class, organized program or organized activity that is not a sport:
  - must be delivered through a microphone if the instructor would otherwise need to raise their voice beyond the level of normal conversation, and
  - must not encourage loud talking, singing or shouting.
- Music played in the facility cannot exceed the decibel level at which normal conversation is possible.
Sport

- Screen all athletes, coaches, trainers and parents.
  - Perform a COVID-19 Self-Assessment before attending or participating in any activity.
  - Stay home if feeling unwell or you do not pass the self-assessment.
- Wear masks at all times even during physical activity, if possible and safe.
- Adapt to reduce contact and maintain physical distance
- Change drills and play to allow for physical distancing.
- Consider increasing distance when available including on sidelines and the bench.
- Arrive dressed for the activity to limit the use of lockers and change rooms.
- Avoid group celebrations and other customs (e.g. handshakes, high fives, fist bumps, chest bumps) to limit contact with others.
- Arrive no more than 5-10 minutes before the activity and do not linger in the facility or parking lot after the activity.
- Arrange for transportation to and from activities so that only members from the same household are sharing rides.
- Bring your own equipment and do not share your personal items (e.g. water bottle, towels, etc.).
- Limit yourself to one sport, team or league as a player, coach, or trainer.
- Limit travel to other regions in the province and out of province.

Front desk, sales and registration

- Appointments/reservations are required for entry. If participating in a team sport, only one reservation per team is required.
- Duration of stay is limited to 90 minutes or less at one time, unless engaged in a sport.
- Install physical barriers at front/service desks (e.g. plexiglass).
- Encourage online or telephone sales and registration processes.
- Use a contactless process to log attendance (e.g. scanner), if necessary.
- Encourage electronic payment by debit or credit card, and to tap instead of using the PIN pad.
- Remove unnecessary items such as magazines, pens etc.
- Review the City of Ottawa’s COVID-19 Guidance for Retail Settings and Food Premises, as applicable.
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 Return to Play Resources
- Ottawa Return to Play Roadmap
- Ontario Self-Assessment
- Safety Planning
- City of Ottawa – Business Reopening Toolkit
- 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 ottawapublichealth.ca/WorkplaceCOVID19
References

