

Algoma Public Health

COVID-19: Guidelines for Reopening Fitness Facilities and Resuming Group Fitness & Personal Training

July 21st, 2020

Background

This guideline is intended for owners and operators of fitness facilities, instructors/trainers of group fitness classes and personal training. This guideline has been developed to support sport, recreation, fitness facility operators with reopening their facilities as part of stage 3.

- **Part 1** - provides general guidance and resources to support reopening
- **Part 2** - helps you to modify your premises and practices to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19

Please note that this guidance document contains basic information as outlined in [the instructions provided by the Algoma Medical Officer of Health](#), effective July 17th. In the event of any conflict between this guidance document and the legislation, the legislation prevails.

If you have a specific question about anything in this document, please call Algoma Public Health at: 705-942-4646 ext. 3273, email healthyworkplaces@algomapublichealth.com or visit www.algomapublichealth.com/healthyworkplaces

Part 1:

General Considerations

- This guidance should be used in conjunction with other relevant sport and recreation guidance.
- Fitness activities should be led by a responsible person [fitness instructor or trainer] who will assume the responsibility to support the adherence to these guidelines.
- Wherever possible, activities should be re-located to outdoor settings.
- Whenever possible, virtual options should still be provided for those unable to or not comfortable attending in-person sessions.
- Provide portable handwashing stations (sink with water, soap and paper towel) or alcohol-based hand sanitizer at entry and exit points and encourage patrons to also bring their own.
- Facility ventilation systems should be both operational and appropriate for the activities practiced within.
 - Facility owners may wish to consult with an expert in Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) for assistance.
- Consideration should be given to how to appropriately include or accommodate vulnerable persons such as seniors, those with disabilities and persons with compromised immune systems.
 - Examples include reducing attendance, offering virtual methods of engagement (where feasible) and dedicating certain rooms/times for those at greater risk.
 - Instructors/responsible persons may not know who is an at risk person, so consideration may be given to beginning high-intensity group physical activities with a reminder that there may be increased risk of transmission in these settings, and spacing guidance should be carefully followed.
- Remove unnecessary communal items such as candy, magazines, and complimentary phone chargers. Where disposable water cups are provided, place a garbage receptacle close by for disposal of any used cups.

Refer to the [Framework for Reopening our Province during Stage 3](#) for additional information.

Part 2:

Screening

- Any person participating in a fitness class or activity – including staff and clients – should be directed to perform a [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) before arriving.
- Post signage at the facility entrance for visitor self-screening:
 - [Visitors Notice](#) (8.5x11 poster)



- Assign an employee to perform active screening of staff and participants for [symptoms of COVID-19](#) prior to entry. Download APH's [Sample COVID-19 Screening Form for Employers](#).
- Anyone that exhibits at least one COVID-19 symptom must not be permitted to enter, should self-isolate and should be encouraged to visit a [COVID-19 Assessment Centre](#) to be tested. Individuals who have symptoms, but who have not been tested for COVID-19, must not participate and should self-isolate for 14 days after the start of their symptoms and until they have been symptom-free for at least 24 hours (whichever is longer).
- Include COVID-19 [screening, symptoms](#), and general information in your regular staff and participant communications (e.g. email, newsletter, website, Facebook Page). Encourage clients to visit <http://www.algomapublichealth.com/disease-and-illness/infectious-diseases/novel-coronavirus/>

Preventing and Managing COVID-19 Outbreaks

- Keep a record of attendance for all activities and bookings at your facility. This will facilitate contact tracing by the health unit.
 - Work with groups, associations, clubs and coaches to facilitate this process.
- If there is a case of COVID-19 who was contagious who was at the facility, public health will use that list to notify other attendees and staff. This may include instructions to [self-isolate](#) or [self-monitor](#) for COVID-19 symptoms.
- Public health will advise of any additional cleaning and disinfecting measures needed to reduce the risk of spread in the setting.

Mandatory Mask Use in Enclosed Public Spaces

- Require that employees wear a mask (face-covering) when working in the public areas of the premises unless the employee or agent is within or behind a physical barrier.
- Ensure that no members of the public are permitted to enter or remain in the public areas of the Enclosed Public Space unless he or she is wearing a mask (face covering) in a manner that covers their nose, mouth, and chin. Exemptions apply, Please review the most [current directives and information on masks](#).
 - **NOTE: The temporary removal of a mask where necessary is permitted while engaging in an athletic or fitness activity including water-based activities.**
- Post, at every public entrance to the premises, prominent and clearly visible signage about the mask requirement. A [sample sign](#) is available on APH's website.

Staff & Volunteers

- Assign equipment and supplies to individual staff members and avoid any unnecessary sharing.



- Provide training and information to staff on COVID-19 transmission and prevention.
 - Instruct staff and volunteers on proper [hand hygiene techniques](#) and respiratory etiquette.
 - Ensure that all persons working at the establishment are familiar with the requirements of the Mandatory Mask Use policy.
- Ensure staff and volunteers have access to hand washing stations (sink with water, soap and paper towel) or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Designate a staff person to ensure public health guidelines are followed (e.g. watching for adherence to physical distancing).
 - The responsible person should not be someone engaged in other critical duties (e.g. referee, lifeguard).

Scheduling and Capacity

Adhere to all [ministry guidelines related to what can reopen in each stage](#), including limits on gatherings and capacity (these should be consulted regularly to understand the requirements for your setting based on the stage of reopening). As of July 17, 12:01 a.m.:

- The total number permitted to be at the facility in classes or organized activity at any one time must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least two metres, and cannot exceed:
 - the indoor gathering limit of 50 people; or
 - the outdoor limit of 100.
- The total number of people permitted in areas containing weights or exercise machines is limited to the number of people that can maintain physical distancing of at least two metres, which cannot exceed the indoor gathering limit of 50 people.
- If additional strategies are needed to manage the number of people at the facility, consider using a booking system for classes and booking workout periods. Request that clients do not arrive more than 5 minutes before their scheduled class or booking and coordinate appointment times to avoid crowding and reduce wait times.
 - Clients should be advised that they must cancel an appointment or booking if they develop symptoms after making an appointment. Communicate your illness policy and facility protocols to clients prior to their appointment. Consider adjusting your cancellation policy to allow for clients to cancel or reschedule appointments or bookings without penalty should they develop symptoms.
- Encourage clients to limit their time spent in the facility and to maintain physical distancing when returning to vehicles or homes.

- To support cleaning and disinfection efforts, schedule should allow adequate time to thoroughly clean and disinfect equipment and spaces (including washrooms, locker and change rooms, gyms, etc) between each groups/booking.

Physical Distancing

- Activities should be modified to allow [physical distancing](#) between individuals unless they are from the same [family or social circle](#). Physical distancing should be reinforced by the instructor(s) throughout the activity.
 - Holding activities outdoors (when feasible) is preferable.
- To ensure physical distancing of at least 2 metres between clients and staff in all facility areas (e.g. including lobby, locker and change rooms, hallways):
 - Physical barriers are recommended to separate front-desk attendants and patrons.
 - Traffic flow and physical distancing markers should be visible throughout the facility.
 - Facilities should develop procedures that allow for uncongested drop off and pick up of participants. (e.g., drive-thru lanes for pick up and drop-off of participants, dedicated entrances and exits for incoming and outgoing sport teams)
 - Common area chairs and tables should be stacked, roped off or removed from the area to promote distancing.
- Where spotting is necessary for heavy weightlifting, participants may form small cohorts to limit direct contact with others.
- Staff training should be held online if possible or in small groups with physical distancing measures in place.
- Limit physical contact by using online payment and registration or hands-free check in. If wristbands are required, the operator should use self-applied bracelets and advise patrons to remove them once they arrive home.
- It is strongly recommended to designate assigned spaces for organized fitness classes (e.g. by marking circles on the floor to designate where each person should exercise).
- Provide [physical distancing signage](#) at the entrance and throughout access areas

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Develop a written plan that ensures equipment and surfaces are [cleaned and disinfected](#) at least twice per day, or when visibly dirty. Encourage staff to document the time a specific area is cleaned.
 - Focus on high traffic areas, frequently touched surfaces and objects (e.g. door handles, light switches)
 - Use appropriate cleaner and disinfectant as per manufacturer's instructions (consult the [list of acceptable disinfectants](#)).



- Include all equipment in your facility's cleaning and disinfecting plan.
- Any equipment that is rented to, provided to or provided for the use of users of the facility must be cleaned and disinfected between each use.
- Activities must not be practised within the facility if they require the use of fixed structures that cannot be cleaned and disinfected between each use.
- Clearly communicate and post policies requiring clients to wipe down equipment before and after every use.
- Provide adequate supplies and garbage bins for disposing used materials.
- Consider keeping all non-stationary equipment in one area to facilitate cleaning and disinfecting in between uses. Station an employee nearby to wipe down equipment after each use before being put back into circulation. Some examples of non-stationary equipment include balls, blocks, mats, resistance bands, kettlebells, skipping ropes, wobble boards, and foam rollers.
- Schedule time between classes to allow for appropriate cleaning and disinfecting.
- Reduce the number of common surfaces that need to be touched (e.g., prop doors open, no-touch waste containers, no-touch towel dispenser or hand dryer).
- Restrict access to non-essential shared equipment (e.g. vending machine, coffee maker, water fountains and bottle filling stations).
- Monitor washrooms and handwashing sinks to re-stock supplies, and [clean and disinfect](#) surfaces at a minimum twice per day or as they become visibly dirty (following same instructions as above).

Participants

- Encourage participants to bring their own equipment to the facility (e.g. mats, blocks). Wherever possible, limit the use of shared equipment unless participants engaged in the same activity are from the same household or social circle.
 - Participant-owned equipment should be visibly clean.
- Participants should not share any personal items (e.g., water bottles, towels).
- Enable and encourage participants to perform frequent hand hygiene before, during and after the activity.
 - Participants can be encouraged to carry and use their own hand sanitizer.
- Participants should refrain from touching their eyes, nose, mouth and face while participating or while wearing sporting gloves.
- Unless otherwise approved or required, participants should not be accompanied by a parent or guardian. If a parent or guardian is required to be present, they must practise physical distancing and maintain all other relevant public health measures.
- Encourage participants to exhibit good respiratory etiquette (i.e., sneezing or coughing into the crook of the elbow, no spitting, no clearing of nasal passages, coughing or sneezing into a tissue).



- If a participant requires basic first aid, consider having a family member attend to them. If this is not possible, if first aid is provided by a facility employee, they should use appropriate personal protective equipment, including a mask and gloves.
- Refer to the Return to Sport and Recreation – Guidance for Participants for additional information.

Equipment

- Consider the layout of equipment and fitness areas to ensure at least 2-metre physical distancing is available to clients at all times and in all areas.
- Designate areas for the use of the equipment and for moving around the area to ensure physical distances are maintained. Consider using tape on the floor to define these areas.
- Reconfigure weight rooms/areas and stationary equipment (e.g. weight machines) to promote physical distancing. Weight machines should be spaced at least 2 metres apart.
- Designate areas for the use of certain equipment (e.g. stretching areas, kettle bell areas) and for movement (e.g., heavy rope, tire flipping zone) to ensure distancing is maintained.
 - Consider using markers on the floor to define designated areas and manage flow of participants.
- Consider installing physical barriers between equipment wherever increased distancing is not possible.
 - It is strongly recommended that both physical barriers and at least 3 metres of distance be placed between equipment used for high intensity activities (e.g. treadmills, stationary bikes) to lessen the likelihood of transmission from higher exertion.
- Consult the Sport and Activity-specific Considerations for Facility Operators for guidance related to personal training, group classes, high and low intensity activities, and more.

Locker and Change Rooms

- Facilities should discourage the use of locker rooms and change rooms whenever possible.
 - Encourage participants to come dressed for their activity.
- Any washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms, showers or similar amenities made available to the public must be [cleaned and disinfected](#) as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.
- Set capacity limits on how many people can use locker rooms, change rooms, showers or similar amenities made available to the public at the same time to ensure physical distancing.
- Adjust lockers to enable physical distancing.
- Ensure that surfaces, sinks and toilets in locker rooms and change rooms are cleaned and disinfected regularly



- Remove self-serve and common-use items such as hair dryers, cotton swabs and disposable razors.
- Consider not providing towel service to clients. Encourage clients to bring their own towels.
 - If towel service is still offered, establish policies to ensure all laundry is handled appropriately. Provide clearly marked laundry bins and ensure dirty towels are laundered before next use. Enhanced laundering practices are not required above the usual practices in place.

Saunas and Steam Rooms

- Saunas and steam rooms are not yet permitted to open.

Tanning Services

- If the fitness facility offers tanning services, the owner/operator should consult and adhere to the requirements outlined in the [COVID-19: Guidance for Personal Service Settings](#).

Adapted with permission from the Eastern Ontario Health (originally adapted from Alberta)