



## Introduction

**This tip sheet is for employers and managers of gyms and fitness clubs** and applies to all workers, contractors, suppliers, service providers, members, and guests (note: members, guests and any visitors will be referred to as “members” in this tip sheet). It provides an overview of potential workplace hazards due to COVID-19 and recommends control measures.

In all cases, guidance from [local public health authorities](#) and your jurisdictional [Occupational Health and Safety \(OHS\) regulator](#) must be followed.

For general COVID-19 prevention practices, refer to these CCOHS documents:

- [COVID-19 Health and Safety Resources](#)
- [Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19 Health and Safety Planning for Employers](#)
- [COVID-19 Prevention for Workers](#)
- [COVID-19 FAQ](#)

Gyms and fitness clubs may offer additional services that may have different restrictions and recommendations. If applicable to your workplace, refer to these CCOHS tip sheets:

- [Sports Activities](#)
- [Indoor Pools](#)
- [Health Clinics](#) (physiotherapy, massage, etc.)
- [Restaurants](#)
- [Laundry](#)
- [Daycares](#)
- [Retail](#)

## Consider the Risks

The risk of [COVID-19 transmission](#) is increased with:

- Longer and more frequent person-to-person interactions, especially when less than 2 metres apart and with people from outside the household group.
- Crowded places and large gatherings.
- Generation of respiratory droplets and aerosols (e.g., during physical exertion, speaking, coughing, etc.).
- Indoor settings.
- Poor [ventilation](#).
- Inadequate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette or access to cleaning facilities and products.
- Contaminated high-touch surfaces and shared objects.
- High number of COVID-19 cases in the local community (or an outbreak).
- Low levels of COVID-19 vaccination among workers and members.
- COVID-19 variants which are more transmissible.

Risk of transmission increases further when several of these risk factors occur at the same time.

Participation in gym and fitness club activities and services may result in exposure to a combination of these risks and others unique to your setting. Consider all possible COVID-19 exposure scenarios and perform a COVID-19 [risk assessment](#). Develop or use an existing [risk assessment checklist](#) to document and evaluate all work setting characteristics, activities, job roles, and the impacts of members.

Here are sample questions to help you identify the COVID-19 risks:

- Is the setting indoor, outdoor, or a combination of both?
- Is ventilation adequate for the setting?



- Are there many existing or rising COVID-19 cases in the community?
- What percentage of people are vaccinated?
- Is proof of vaccination required from workers, visitors, clients etc.?
- Is enough space available for each person to allow for physical distancing (if required)?
- What activities are offered to members? For example, weight room training, yoga, spin class etc.
- Are members' activities separated into different rooms or floors?
- Are group classes offered?
- What tasks will workers do? For example, greeting and screening guests, personal training, customer service, cleaning and disinfecting, etc.
- How frequent and physically close will interactions be?
- What are the high-touch surfaces or objects?

## Control Measures

To provide the highest level of protection to workers and members, use multiple [public health measures](#) and [workplace controls](#) in a [layered approach](#), since no single measure is completely effective. Be careful not create new workplace hazards or negatively impact existing safety controls. Review and adjust programs as necessary, in consultation with the workplace health and safety committee or representative.

A written workplace [COVID-19 Safety Plan](#), supported by a [risk assessment](#), documents the control measures you have or shall put in place to protect workers and members from the COVID-19 transmission risks. A written plan may be legally required by the jurisdiction in which you operate. Refer to local authorities for details on what must be included in the plan, if it needs to be posted etc.

Meet your legal occupational health and safety obligations by doing everything reasonably possible in the circumstances to protect the health and safety of your workers. Implement policies and programs to [accommodate](#) workers who are at [high risk](#) of severe disease or outcomes (i.e., people who are older, have chronic medical conditions, are immunocompromised, or are ineligible to receive COVID-19 vaccination) from a COVID-19 infection. Some services, such as personal training, may be offered remotely.

The sections below provide tips on how to apply COVID-19 control measures.

## Ventilation

- [Ventilate](#) indoor spaces appropriately (generally, the more enclosed the space, the more ventilation will be necessary). Seek advice from a Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning ([HVAC](#)) specialist on ways to increase air exchanges per hour, reduce recirculated air, information on available upgrades to air filtration and disinfection, and maintenance and cleaning of HVAC systems.
- Exhaust fans should vent to the outside and be run at low speed to remove contaminated air while not creating significant pressure changes.
- Make sure that air circulation or cooling fans do not direct air flow from person to person.
- Open windows and doors to help improve ventilation but be aware of limitations from weather and the HVAC system.
- If existing ventilation systems cannot be improved, consider installing portable air filtration units with high-efficiency particulate (HEPA) filters.
- Keep humidity between 30% and 50%. Lower humidity (dry air) may cause respiratory droplets to stay suspended in the air longer, while more humid air causes respiratory droplets to increase in size causing them to fall to the ground more rapidly.

## Physical Barriers

Install [barriers](#), such as clear acrylic plastic or plexiglass, where possible and appropriate, making sure not to block aisles or exits (i.e., emergency escape). Barriers should be positioned to block respiratory droplets. Clean and disinfect barriers at least daily. They can be installed:



- At the reception desk between workers and members.
- Between equipment which cannot meet physical distancing requirements.
- Between urinals in locker rooms.

## Physical Distancing

Physical distancing requires people to:

- Maintain a safe distance from others (at least 2 metres in all directions).
- Avoid non-essential in-person interactions.
- Keep interactions as few and as brief as possible.

For general physical distancing recommendations, refer to CCOHS [COVID-19 and Physical Distancing](#).

Consider the following tips for additional safety:

- Follow occupancy limits defined by the local public health or government authority and the applicable fire code (the limits include workers and members combined). Keep in mind how limits apply to smaller areas such as group exercise rooms, personal training rooms, locker rooms, washrooms, and elevators. Occupancy limits include workers and members combined.
- If there are challenges keeping under the permitted number of people, consider a system where members are required to book their sessions in advance and limit the duration of each session.
- Position equipment so that members are at least 2 metres apart and not facing each other. It may be necessary to take some equipment out of service if distancing cannot be accomplished or barriers are not available.
- Only 1 person or household group should use equipment or workout space at a time.
- Close-contact services, such as personal training or sports physiotherapy consultations, may need to be suspended if distancing and other measures are not protective.
- Limit the number of people in narrow areas such as staircases and corridors. If possible, make traffic one way only.
- Limit access to sinks, urinals, lockers, seating etc. which are within 2 metres of each other by alternating units out of service (e.g., block access with tape or signs).
- Suspend activities in enclosed spaces such as saunas, or limit to 1 person or household group at a time.
- Allow time between each group session or use of a small room, shower stall or sauna to allow for ventilation, cleaning, and disinfecting.
- Allow exceptions to distancing guidance in certain circumstances such as rescuing a distressed person, providing first aid, or performing Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).

## Hygiene Measures

- Encourage good and frequent [hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette](#).
- Provide hand washing stations in locker rooms and washrooms.
- Provide hand sanitizer dispensers (minimum 60% alcohol content) in high traffic areas such as entrances, service counters, breakrooms, elevators and throughout the facility.
- Everyone must sanitize their hands before entry.
- Provide disinfecting wipes or disinfectant dispensers with paper towels throughout the facility for use on equipment. The disinfectant must be [approved for use against COVID-19 by Health Canada](#), and not harmful to the skin when undiluted.
- Provide paper towels for the purpose of cleaning and disinfecting equipment and wiping perspiration.
- Members should disinfect equipment before and after each use.
- Provide sufficient lined waste receptacles for used wipes.
- Reduce the number of high-touch points:



- Motion activated automatic doors.
  - Hand motion activated automatic faucets.
  - Automatic flushing toilets and urinals.
  - Hand or foot activated soap, towel, and sanitizer dispensers.
  - Hand or foot activated plastic lined waste containers.
  - No touch methods of tracking worker attendance such as key cards or electronic messaging.
  - Contactless payment methods and minimize cash payments as much as possible.
- Consider requiring that workers wear freshly cleaned uniforms or clothes for each shift.
  - Encourage members to change into fitness apparel before arriving to eliminate the need to use the locker rooms.
  - Ask everyone to store their personal items (such as jackets) in separate lockers, in labeled sealed bins/bags, or spaces which do not allow physical contact between each person's belongings or shared surfaces.
  - Consider not providing towel and laundry service. Ask members to bring their own towels or use disposable paper towels. If providing towels and laundry service, do not shake dirty laundry, use disposable gloves, and perform hand hygiene after.
  - Shut off water fountains or only permit their use for filling water bottles (no direct drinking). Each person should have their own drinking bottle. Discourage sharing of food and drinks.
  - Discourage singing, yelling, and chanting. Have fitness class instructors use a microphone to amplify their voices and lower the music volume to reduce the need to shout.

Workers should perform the following based on an established schedule:

- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces and equipment such as payment pin pads and touch screens. If possible, do so between each user.
- Use disposable gloves when handling cash and periodically wash hands with soap and water or sanitize.
- Check and restock sanitizer, disinfectant, wipes, and paper towels.
- Check and empty waste receptacles to prevent overflow.
- Avoid sharing work equipment such as clipboards, pens etc., if possible.

## Communication and Training

For general recommendations, refer to CCOHS [COVID-19 Communication and Training](#).

Communicate the rules of the workplace, gym, or fitness club (including public health measures in place) to all workers and members. Communications should be in languages that can be understood by all, and easily accessed (online, email, text, advertisements, verbally, or [posters or infographics](#) in locations where they can be easily noticed).

COVID-19 specific training should include the following:

- Common [COVID-19 symptoms](#) and how to respond when symptoms are identified.
- What to do if sick, and how to [get tested for COVID-19](#).
- How and when to report COVID-19 illness.
- Benefits, options, and requirements for vaccination.
- How to [prevent the spread](#) of COVID-19 and [protect themselves and others](#).
- Ways to stay informed using [reputable sources](#) such as the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) and [local public health authorities](#).
- Policies, plans, and procedures (such as mask policy, vaccination policy, cleaning and disinfection schedule, COVID-19 safety plan). Recommunicate whenever changes are made.
- Ways to diffuse difficult situations with workers or members. For example, train conflict resolution techniques to workers that interact with people who may react aggressively to COVID-19 public health measure or limited services.



- Consequences for any member refusing to comply with the rules and regulations. For example, they may be denied access to the facility and have their membership revoked.
- Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System ([WHMIS](#)). Make sure workers understand how to protect themselves when using cleaning and disinfecting products.

Post signs and infographics where they can be seen by workers and attendees, such as:

- [Take the Time to Wash Your Hands](#): Washrooms and locker rooms.
- [Prevent the Spread of Infections](#): Entrances, high-touch surfaces.
- [COVID-19: How to choose, use and care for a mask](#): Entrances.
- [About coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#): Entrances.
- Screening poster (obtained from your [local public health authority](#)): Entrances.
- Signs indicating the maximum occupancy for rooms or spaces, especially those which should have few occupants: Washrooms, locker rooms, saunas, elevators, group class studios, break rooms, etc.
- Floor markers which indicate workout zones and encourage physical distancing: Near training equipment, free weights, workstations and in break rooms.
- Facility rules such as mandatory cleaning of equipment, weights, and plates before and after use, and when masks must or may not be worn.

## Vaccination

- Follow applicable governmental requirements which identify vaccination of workers as a condition of employment, or proof of vaccination from the public as a requirement to enter the facility.
- The employer, health and safety committee or representative, and union should develop a COVID-19 vaccination policy and address any concerns surrounding mandatory COVID-19 vaccination requirements, including any valid exemptions and need for [accommodation](#).
- Encourage eligible workers to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Acknowledge that some individuals may not be eligible to receive the vaccine (proof of exemption may be required).
- Provide support for workers to attend local vaccination clinic appointments if these times occur during work hours.
- All workplace COVID-19 rules and public health measures must still be followed even if all workers are fully vaccinated.
- Refer to the government of Canada website "[Vaccines for COVID-19](#)", "[The facts about COVID-19 vaccines](#)", and the CCOHS "[COVID-19 Vaccines](#)" for detailed information about vaccination.

## Screening and Contact Tracing

- Request proof of vaccination as required.
- Encourage passive symptom screening if there is low risk of COVID-19 spread:
  - Individuals monitor and report their own illness or exposure to COVID-19 positive people.
- Implement active symptom screening if there is high risk of COVID-19 spread:
  - Administer health [screening](#) questions to all workers and members before they are allowed into the facility. Include current COVID-19 symptoms (if any), recent travel, and potential COVID-19 exposures.
  - Create your own list of questions, use a generic [checklist](#) form, or use one provided by your local public health authority.
  - Consider having workers complete a self-assessed screening using a company portal or app before coming into work.
- [Rapid testing](#) may be performed in addition to the screening questionnaire and, in jurisdictions where permitted, in place of COVID-19 vaccination verification for vaccine-exempt persons. Ensure that all safety protocols for



rapid testing (PPE, training, etc.) are in place.

- Collect the contact information (name, phone number, email address) of all persons entering the facility, the date, and time. This information should be provided to the local public health authority if requested for the purpose of [contact tracing](#). All information must be safely stored and destroyed as required by privacy legislation.
- Workers or members that pass the screening can enter the facility.

## COVID-19 Response Plan

- Refer to the infographic [Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) for what to do if a worker or other person is identified as having symptoms or has potentially been exposed to COVID-19.
- Anyone who does not pass the screening should not be allowed into the facility.
- Workers who do not pass the screening should stay (or return) home and contact their supervisor. Workers should also contact their health care provider or local public health authority and follow their instructions.
- When any person experiences [COVID-19 symptoms](#) while already in the facility:
  - Immediately have them wear a mask (preferably a respirator or medical mask, if not available a well-constructed and well fitting non-medical mask).
  - Ask them to leave as soon as it is safe for them to do so. If needed, isolate them in a designated area, away from other workers and members, until they can leave.
- Call **911** for medical assistance if symptoms are life threatening. Notify their emergency contact.
- If the case is work-related involving a worker, additional notifications may be required. Contact your jurisdictional [OHS regulator](#) and [workers' compensation board](#) for guidance. Complete an incident report and begin an investigation.
- Adopt sick leave policies that are flexible and consider providing support to workers who are off sick (i.e., do not penalise workers that do not come to work when they feel sick).

## Cleaning and Disinfection

Develop a [cleaning and disinfecting](#) schedule and follow a [standard operating procedure for touch points](#). The schedule should identify when cleaning needs to be done and record when it has taken place.

Use an [approved hard surface disinfectant](#), follow the manufacturer's instructions or Safety Data Sheet (SDS), and always wear the recommended Personal Protective Equipment (as a minimum, masks and gloves are recommended). Focus cleaning and disinfection on:

- High transmission risk objects and surfaces should be disinfected by workers multiple times a day and before closing. These include:
  - Equipment
  - Free weights and plates
  - Doors
  - Handrails
  - Elevator buttons
  - Lockers
- Areas where members and workers are expected to spend most of their time.
- Washrooms, including faucets and flushing mechanisms which require touch to operate.
- Barriers.
- Equipment shared with users or workers on different shifts.
- Dispensers (sanitizer, disinfectant, paper towels etc.) which require touch to operate.
- Bins.

# Gyms and Fitness Clubs



Members should also be required to clean equipment, free weights, and plates before and after each use.

After cleaning and disinfecting, consider:

- Used cleaning cloths, towels etc. must be properly handled to prevent contamination, and laundered or disposed of after every use.
- Deposit heavily contaminated or disposable items (paper towels, wipes, gloves etc.) into plastic lined waste containers.
- Dispose of garbage at least daily and follow up with hand hygiene.

## Mask Wearing

Refer to the [Public Health Agency of Canada "COVID-19 mask use: Advice for community settings"](#), and the CCOHS [Get the Facts on Masks](#) for detailed information on how to properly wear and care for masks.

- Follow the mask wearing requirements of your local public health authority and jurisdiction. If not required, mask wearing should still be encouraged as an additional measure when there is higher risk for COVID-19 spread (e.g., low vaccination coverage, increased community spread, variants of concern), or when physical distancing is not possible.
- Masks should be well constructed and well fitting, covering the nose, mouth, and chin.
- If permitted by applicable legislation and the mask policy, members may remove masks when exercising alone or exclusively with a household group but should keep them on when moving around the facility.
- Encourage people not to touch their face or mask with unwashed hands.
- Workers may also wish to use eye protection (such as a [face shield](#)) in addition to a mask, when in close physical contact with others or when working with chemicals. Note that face shields do not offer equivalent protection to masks.
- Masks should not be worn by anyone who is unable to remove the mask without assistance (e.g., due to their age, ability, or developmental status).
- Be aware that non-medical masks have limitations, and improper mask use and disposal can increase the risk of infection. While non-medical masks are useful in reducing the spread of COVID-19, they are not considered Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as they do not meet regulated testing and certification standards.

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Refer to [Personal protective equipment \(COVID-19\): Overview](#) (Health Canada) and [COVID-19 and Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#) (CCOHS) for more detailed information about PPE.

- PPE includes such items as gloves, eye protection (e.g., face shield), and safety footwear.
- Continue to use PPE for existing occupational safety hazards and emergencies. COVID-19 PPE policies must not interfere when a higher level of protection is needed for the task.
- Employers should conduct a hazard assessment and make sure that workers have the correct PPE for the tasks and activities they are performing.
- Workers may need PPE if they are using cleaning and disinfecting products (refer to the manufacturers' safe handling instructions) or providing emergency first-aid.
- Workers must be trained on how to properly use and care for their PPE.

**If you or someone you know is in crisis, please contact your local hospital, call 911 immediately, or contact a [Crisis Centre in your area](#).**



It is important that mental health resources and support are provided to all workers, including access to an employee assistance program, if available.

# Gyms and Fitness Clubs



For further information on COVID-19, refer to the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#).

Note that this guidance is just some of the adjustments organizations can make during a pandemic. Adapt this list by adding your own good practices and policies to meet your organization's specific needs.

**Disclaimer:** As public and occupational health and safety information is changing rapidly, local public health authorities should be consulted for specific, regional guidance. This information is not intended to replace medical advice or legislated health and safety obligations. Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy, currency and completeness of the information, CCOHS does not guarantee, warrant, represent or undertake that the information provided is correct, accurate or current. CCOHS is not liable for any loss, claim, or demand arising directly or indirectly from any use or reliance upon the information.