Introduction

This document is for employers, workers and customers who use indoor pool facilities and provides an overview of the recommended controls for the workplace due to COVID-19.

For general COVID-19 prevention practices, refer to these CCOHS documents:
- Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19
- COVID-19 Health and Safety Planning for Employers
- COVID-19 Prevention for Workers
- COVID-19 Health and Safety Resources

Meet your legal occupational health and safety obligations by doing everything reasonably possible under the circumstances to protect the health and safety of your employees. In all cases, guidance from local public health authorities must be followed. Also refer to current guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), your jurisdictional OHS regulator, and applicable associations.

Consider the Risks

Participation in indoor pool activities may involve close contact with people and frequently touched surfaces. The risk of COVID-19 transmission during these activities increases where people are working in closed spaces (with poor ventilation) and in crowded places with people outside of their immediate household. Risk is higher in settings where these factors overlap and/or involve activities such as close-range conversations, singing, shouting or heavy breathing (e.g., exercising).

The COVID-19 virus may also spread when a person touches another person (e.g., a handshake) or a surface of an object (also referred to as a fomite) that has the virus on it, and then touches their mouth, nose or eyes with unwashed hands.

Each indoor pool facility may have unique situations. Assess the risk for each activity and interaction separately. Consider the following:

- What activities do your workers do? Examples: reception and customer service, swimmer orientation, coaching, training, life guarding, pool and equipment maintenance, cleaning, laundry, etc.
- How many people does each worker and swimmer interact with and how close are the physical interactions?
- How long is the interaction? Evidence indicates that person-to-person spread is more likely with prolonged contact.
- Do workers and swimmers frequently have contact with high touch surfaces?
- Does the size of the lobby, change room, showers, deck, and swimming pool allow for physical distancing?
- What pool activities does the facility offer? Examples: free swim, family swim, swimming lessons, water fitness classes, lengths, pool use by age groups. The number of participants may need to be reduced.
- What equipment does the facility offer? Examples: diving boards, slides, access to balls, nets, floating devices, life jackets, pool noodles, paddles, etc. Is equipment shared between participants or assigned to a specific person or group? More equipment requires additional time for cleaning and disinfecting between users.
- Is the fitness activity completed by individuals separately (e.g., swimming lengths) or at the same time in a group setting (e.g., lessons, water fitness classes)? The number of participants may need to be reduced.
- Does the activity involve intense physical effort (increased or forceful breathing)? Consider increasing the distance between participants (greater than 2 metres).
- Does the activity involve loud verbal instructions and music (shouting, yelling, singing)? Consider lowering music and using a microphone for instruction rather than shouting. Ask participants to refrain from shouting, singing, or yeling.
- Are classes with the same scheduled participants each time, or are they drop-in based? Consider asking participants to pre-book.
- Can swimmers arrive ready to swim and leave immediately after, or is the use of a change room or shower facility required? Availability of showers and change rooms will require additional time for cleaning and disinfecting between users.
- How well can workers and participants follow public health measures? This ability depends on the number and characteristics of people who attend (e.g., age, maturity, physical ability, comprehension), proximity and durations of interactions between participants, as well as the measures put in place by employers.
- Consider additional measures to protect workers or participants who are at risk for more severe disease or outcomes from COVID-19, such as the option to work remotely.

Control Measures

- Determine the measures required to effectively control the transmission of COVID-19. Use the hierarchy of
controls (i.e., elimination, substitution, engineering controls, administrative policies, and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE)).

- Include public health personal preventative measures in your control plan. Generally, these include COVID-19 vaccination, limiting occupancy and gathering limits, physical distancing, screening, enhanced cleaning and disinfecting, and the wearing of masks.

- Consider the impact of your control measures on your business continuity plan:
  - How will workers be supported who are unable to report to work because they are sick, awaiting test results, quarantined, or in isolation?
  - What are the recommendations for workers who need to care for school aged children?
  - How will volunteer roles in the community be fulfilled?
  - The risk of severe illness of your workers and their families belonging to a higher risk group. How will they be accommodated?

**Communication**

- Inform and train all workers on the risks of COVID-19, symptoms, and the measures needed to help control transmission. Make sure all staff and others know which control measures are in place before they arrive on-site.

- Post signs throughout the facility to encourage physical distancing, use of masks, cleaning and disinfecting of equipment, and proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Include workplace-specific information and your safety plan. See CCOHS’s [Fact Checking COVID-19 Information](https://www.ccohs.ca) for tips on choosing COVID-19 resources.

- Consider the ability of others to follow the recommended measures based on their health, age, disability, developmental status, or other socio-economic and demographic circumstances.

- Could language barriers impact the ability of the public and others to understand and follow the control measures? Make sure that all communications are suitable for people’s age, ability, reading level, and language preferences.

- Inform all workers and participants in advance if there are changes to policies or practices including reduced hours or restricted access (e.g., washrooms, lockers etc.).

- Create a reservation system with pre-assigned times of use to prevent crowding. Ask participants to arrive no more than 15 minutes before their reserved swim time and to leave promptly afterward.

- Help participants understand that control measures and reduced services are necessary, and that their pool experience might be different. Ask them to be considerate of workers and others.

- Post signs for workers and others not to enter the facility if they may be sick, suspect they may have been exposed, or have travelled outside of Canada within the last 14 days. Provide a flexible no-penalty rescheduling policy.

- Consider a website or phone-based advanced booking system.

- Provide your COVID-19 safety requirements before external service providers visit and work with them to meet their safety requirements. Avoid in-person meetings where possible. Use remote communication methods instead (e.g., teleconferencing, videoconferencing). When in-person meetings are required, use a large well-ventilated space, maintain at least 2 meters apart, and wear masks.

- Encourage workers to report any concerns about COVID-19 to their supervisor or employer. They can also report concerns to their health and safety committee or representative.

- Information on the risks of COVID-19 transmission may change as the pandemic continues to evolve. Keep informed by continuing to follow trusted sources including the Public Health Agency of Canada and your local public health authority.

**COVID-19 Vaccines**

- Discuss the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination with your workers. For current information on the vaccines authorized for use and how to register, please refer to the Government of Canada website: [Vaccines for COVID-19](https://www.canada.ca).
Screening

- Screening is used to identify persons who may be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 and may not be showing any symptoms. It is a way to identify people who may spread the virus so that measures can be taken to prevent further transmission.
- Encourage employees to stay home if they are sick or might be sick. Follow self-assessment steps from the Public Health Agency of Canada or your local public health authority.
- Participants could be screened at the time they make a reservation to swim and again when they enter the facility. If they report any symptoms, have recently travelled outside of the country, or have been in contact with someone with COVID-19, their reservation should be rescheduled.
- Consider asking screening questions before anyone enters the facility using a checklist from your local public health authority or have them complete a questionnaire.
- The most common symptoms are:
  - New or worsening cough
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Temperature equal to or over 38°C
  - Feeling feverish
  - Chills
  - Fatigue or weakness
  - Muscle or body aches
  - New loss of smell or taste
  - Headache
  - Gastrointestinal symptoms (abdominal pain, diarrhea, vomiting)
  - Feeling very unwell
  - Skin changes or rashes (young children)
- Symptoms can vary from person to person and within different age groups.
- Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19. Some people have mild or no symptoms.
- Older adults, people of any age with chronic medical conditions or who are immunocompromised, and those living with obesity are at risk for more severe disease and outcomes from COVID-19.
- Establish procedures for people that do not pass screening or become ill while at the facility. They should wear a mask (preferably a respirator or medical mask, if not available a well-constructed and well-fitting non-medical mask), return home (preferably not by public transit), and contact their health care provider or local public health authority, if required.
- Set a clear policy for what is expected of workers if they get sick, have symptoms, receive a positive COVID-19 test result, or if an exposure is reported involving a staff member or swimmer. If the case is work-related, additional notifications may be required (e.g. the government health and safety regulator and worker compensation board for your province or territory).

Contact Tracing

- Consider keeping a record of the names and contact information for your workers, swimmers, contractors, and essential visitors who enter your workplace for contact tracing purposes. Information should include their name, phone number and/or email, the date and time they entered the building, and what section or area of the building they visited.
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- Keep contact tracing information only for as long as needed (e.g., 30 calendar days). Maintain confidentiality and ensure the information is gathered, used, stored, and destroyed in accordance with your privacy laws.

**COVID-19 Alert App**

- Encourage staff to consider installing the [COVID Alert App](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/coronavirus-covid-19/COVID-19 Alert App) on their phone. This app is designed to let Canadians know whether they may have been exposed to COVID-19. The app maintains one’s privacy: it does not record or share geographic location.

**Physical Distancing**

- Set occupancy limits for the pool. Calculate maximum occupancy using persons per pool area guidelines, and available room for spacing people at least 2 meters apart.
- Do not exceed the maximum gathering and event limits for your jurisdiction.
- Consider limiting any non-essential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations.
- Ensure that aquatic activities, such as fitness classes and swimming lessons, follow physical distancing measures. For example, only members from the same household can assist swimmers with physical contact.
- Consider staggered times for swimming practices and lessons.
- Reduce the overall number of participants in classes and swim camps according to day camp guidance. Distancing should be maintained between different cohort groups.
- Dryland activities (e.g., first aid instruction) should only occur on-deck where there is enough space to allow for physical distancing between cohorts or individuals. Consider having dryland activities occur in or near the facility (e.g., outside, or in a gymnasium or classroom if available).
- Create cohort groups for structured activities (e.g., swim classes, clubs, teams) where physical distancing would be difficult (e.g., instruction).
- Prepare for exceptions to distancing guidance:
  - Anyone rescuing a distressed swimmer, providing first aid, or performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation, with or without an automated external defibrillator
  - Evacuating a facility during an emergency

**Engineering Controls**

- Install physical barriers, floor markings, and other visual cues where needed.
- Establish one-way routes where appropriate to include showers, change rooms and washrooms.
- Rearrange and limit use of seating areas, visitor rooms, locker rooms, common areas, main lobbies, and washrooms. For example, block off some lockers, benches, washroom stalls, showers, and sinks.
- Install plexiglass or other solid barriers that are higher than head height. (e.g., at the reception area).
- Adjust the width of swim lanes to enable physical distancing. Consider alternating lanes or one swimmer per lane.

**Ventilation**

- Poor ventilation allows the accumulation and transmission of virus containing aerosols in indoor spaces. This has been linked to COVID-19 outbreaks.
- Make sure that heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems of indoor spaces are operating properly.
- Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors or other methods.
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However, do not open windows and doors if it poses a safety risk.

- Make sure exhaust fans in washrooms and changerooms are fully functional, operating at maximum capacity and remain on. The use of powerful portable cooling fans might increase the spread of COVID-19 if air blows from an infected person directly at another person in closed spaces. Use other ways to keep rooms cool, such as smaller class sizes, adjusting building ventilation systems, and air conditioning units. If the use of a table or pedestal fan is unavoidable, it is important to regularly bring in air from outside by opening windows or doors, while minimizing how much air blows from one person (or group of people) to another person (or group of people). Avoid high speed settings and direct the fan toward an unoccupied corner and wall spaces above people’s head height.

- Ceiling fans should also be run at low speed and in the reverse flow direction so that air is pulled up toward the ceiling.

- Ventilation systems should be adjusted to:
  - Increase filtration efficiency to the highest level appropriate for the system
  - Increase fresh air flow/percentage of outdoor air
  - Limit use of demand-controlled ventilation; keep system running at the optimal setting

- Explore the use of portable high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtration units.

- Consult an HVAC professional before making changes to the ventilation system.


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**Administrative Controls**

- These types of controls reduce risk through policies, procedures, and training. They rely on personnel management and compliance to be fully effective. When applied properly, they can minimize coronavirus transmission.

- Allow participants to swim only for their allotted time so that the pool and change rooms can be ventilated and disinfected between activities.

- Restrict access to areas of the facility that swimmers and others do not need to go.

- Do not allow the use of diving board or slides. Close saunas and steam rooms.

- Do not allow spectators or non-bathers on the pool deck, as appropriate. Provide alternative viewing areas if available.

- Consider closing shower facilities. If not possible, stagger their use, and clean and disinfect between each use.

- If locker rooms remain open, remove shared items such as scales and hair dryers.

- Remove communal coat check areas and shared footwear or clothing. Allow employees to store their personal items separately or in sealed bins or bags if they do not have lockers.

- Shut off water fountains or replace them with water bottle refill stations. Each person should use their own labelled water bottle.

- Encourage lane etiquette:
  - Ask swimmers to remain in their lane and maintain distance between other swimmers.
  - Avoid stopping or resting at the end of the lane. Ask swimmers to climb out of the pool and rest on the deck.

- Allow adequate time between each group, swim session, or class to minimize interactions between people, for air exchange, and for cleaning and disinfecting.

- Limit the use of pool toys for flotation aids and lessons only.

- Do not rotate or share coaches and trainers during a lesson or class. Have them involved with each individual swimmer where possible.

- Adjust employee schedules to reflect any necessary changes. Stagger meetings, breaks, mealtimes, and orientations.
If there are fewer employees available, make sure essential roles such as trained supervision, and first aid or emergency response persons are still present.

Encourage employees to only work at one location and assign cohort groups of workers to the same shifts every week if possible.

Make sure employees are trained to work safely, including when replacing the duties of others.

Ensure that lifeguards who are actively lifeguarding are not also expected to monitor handwashing, use of masks, or social distancing of others. Assign this monitoring responsibility to another staff member.

Discourage unnecessary physical contact such as hugs, handshakes, and high fives.

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### Personal Hygiene

- Hand wash and sanitizer stations should be well stocked and easy to find near the entrance and other appropriate areas. Make sure they are accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Everyone should perform hand hygiene when entering and exiting the pool facilities, after using washrooms, before and after pool activities, before and after touching shared equipment and surfaces, handling money, and after contact with another person.
- Encourage good respiratory etiquette. Everyone should sneeze or cough into a tissue or into the bend of their arm instead of their hands.
- Encourage use of tissues and other means to prevent the spread of bodily fluids. Immediately dispose of used tissues in lined garbage cans and follow up with hand hygiene.
- Swimmers should not share uncleaned towels, goggles, or any other equipment with anyone outside of their household.
- Ask swimmers to arrive in clean swimwear and to return home to use their personal showers to avoid using facility showers and locker rooms.
- Consider discontinuing towel and laundry service. Ask swimmers to bring their own towels.
- Encourage patrons and swimmers to keep equipment, clothing, and towels in a closed gym bag when not in use, and to minimize its contact with shared surfaces.
- Consider installing wall hooks placed 2 meters (six feet) apart for swimmers to hang their bags and place their masks before entering the pool.
- Make sure lifeguards have their own well-labelled whistles, stored away from one another.

### Cleaning and Disinfection

- Viruses can remain on objects for a few hours to days depending on the type of surface and environmental conditions.
- Develop a cleaning and disinfection schedule and follow your standard operating procedures for cleaning and disinfecting commonly touched surfaces (door handles, light switches, chairs, etc.) and equipment.
- Clean and disinfect shared work areas, facilities, and equipment between users or shifts.
- Focus on high-touch surfaces and objects such as doors, counters, chairs, handles, railings, lounge chairs, table tops, debit machines and ATMs, touchscreens, phones, light switches, faucets, taps, sanitizer dispensers, diaper-changing stations, showers, water bottle refill stations, and any protective barriers.
- Make sure washrooms are cleaned and disinfected frequently and stocked with soap and paper towels.
- Clean and disinfect shared equipment (e.g., flutter boards, lifejackets, clip boards) between each user.
- Discourage the sharing of items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect or come in contact with the face (for example, goggles, nose clips, and snorkels).
- Discourage the sharing of food, equipment, toys, and supplies with those they do not live with.
- Ensure adequate equipment for patrons and swimmers, such as kick boards and pool noodles to minimize sharing, or limit use of equipment by one group of users at a time. Clean and disinfect between use.
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- If providing towels and laundry service, do not shake dirty laundry. Use disposable gloves and perform hand hygiene after handling laundry. Clean and disinfect hampers and bins. Launder any rental towels between each use.
- Rescue equipment (such as tubes, cans, poles, ring buoys) should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- Remove soft furnishings and objects (e.g., magazines, newspapers) from viewing rooms and lounge areas that cannot be easily cleaned.
- Train workers on cleaning and disinfecting procedures including applicable workplace hazardous materials information system (WHMIS) legislation and provide adequate supplies and PPE.
- Use approved hard-surface disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). This number means that it has been approved for use in Canada.
- Read and follow manufacturer’s instructions for safe use of cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., wear PPE in well-ventilated area, allow enough contact time for disinfectant to kill germs based on the product being used).
- Used cleaning cloths, towels, garments, and uniforms must be properly handled to prevent contamination, and laundered after every use.
- Consider using gloves when handling laundry. Do not shake the laundry when sorting. Use detergent and make sure the laundry is completely dry before using. Clean and disinfect hampers and bins used for storing laundry.
- Replace garbage bins with no-touch receptacles or remove lids that require contact to open. Line garbage cans for safe and convenient disposal of contaminated items, such as used PPE, tissues, and cleaning materials.
- Dispose of garbage at least daily and follow up with hand hygiene.

### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Continue to use PPE for existing safety hazards and emergencies as directed by applicable laws and your employer.
- Additional PPE including eye protection (i.e., goggles or face shield that fully covers the front and sides of the face) and disposable gloves may be required when cleaning and disinfecting. Consult the manufacturer’s safe use and handling instructions or the hazardous product’s safety data sheet (SDS) for recommended PPE.
- Workers may also opt for eye protection (such as face shields) when in close physical contact with others. Stay informed as guidance is evolving regarding the use of face shields. They are not a suitable replacement for face masks but can provide eye protection.
- Ensure adequate PPE is provided for workers who interact with the public. For example, an N95 respirator, a face shield, disposal gloves and a gown should be worn when in direct contact with another person (e.g., providing emergency medical attention).
- Use of a pocket mask with a one-way valve to help protect themselves should resuscitation (i.e. mouth to mouth) be required. Follow updated protocols for providing first aid.
- PPE must be put on (donned) and removed (doffed) appropriately, performing hand hygiene before, during and after removing pieces of equipment. A reference to putting on and removing PPE can be found [here](#).
- Develop procedures and train staff on the selection, use, wearing, removal, disposal, cleaning, maintenance, and storage of PPE. Improper use of PPE can increase the risk of infection.
- Clean and disinfect reusable PPE before it is used by others.
- Wash hands before wearing and after removing PPE.

### Mask Wearing

- Masks might help to block respiratory droplets, but they are not considered personal protective equipment. Follow the recommendations for the use of masks as issued by your public health authority.
- If providing masks, ensure they are well-constructed and well-fitting. Masks should be worn properly, fully covering the nose, mouth, and chin without gaps. Encourage people not to touch their face or mask with
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- Unwashed hands.
- Children under the age of 2 should not wear a mask. Children between the ages of 2 and 5 may be able to wear a mask if supervised. Children older than the age of 5 should follow the same advice for adults on when to wear a mask.
- A mask should not be worn by anyone who is unable to remove it without assistance (e.g., due to their age or ability).
- Wet masks make it difficult to breathe. Masks are not necessary while swimming or when showering but should be worn at all other times in the facility including on the pool deck.
- Be aware that masks have limitations, and improper mask use and disposal can increase the risk of infection.
- Instruct workers and others to change their mask if it becomes wet or soiled. They may wish to bring a second mask in a clean paper bag, envelope, or container that does not trap moisture. Reusable soiled masks should be stored in a separate container.
- Workers should be instructed not touch the outside of the mask while removing it and to wash their hands when finished.
- Do not allow the mask to be a hazard to other activities, such as getting caught on equipment, or getting wet.
- For some people, not being able to see another person’s face and mouth clearly may cause difficulties (e.g., young children, people who are deaf or hard of hearing). Consider using a transparent mask in those situations.

**Evaluate**

- The COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve. Employers must continue to work with their safety committees or representative, to assess their workplace for the risk of COVID-19 transmission and implement effective control strategies.
- Make sure to continue to review your controls and update as necessary.

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.

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.