



Gyms and Fitness Clubs

This tip sheet will help gym and fitness club employers, workers and members protect themselves and others from COVID-19. Gyms and fitness clubs should not re-open until federal, provincial, and local public health authorities say it is safe to do so.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS FROM COVID-19

As a worker:

- Stay informed, be prepared, and follow public health advice:
 - Use trusted information sources, such as the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.canada.ca/coronavirus and your local public health authority.
- Monitor yourself for symptoms of COVID-19. If you have symptoms or you're feeling sick:
 - stay at home and away from others.
 - contact your health care provider or local public health authority and follow their advice.
- If you become sick while at work:
 - isolate yourself from others.
 - tell your supervisor that you are going home.
 - do not take public transit if possible.
- If you are at higher risk of becoming seriously ill, limit the time you spend outside of your home in the community, and avoid crowds as much as possible.
- Practice good hygiene:
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
 - Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
 - Cough or sneeze into the bend of your arm or a tissue, not into your hands.
- Keep 2 metres away from others, including co-workers and clients.
- Follow advice from local public health authorities and your employer about wearing a non-medical mask at work. Wearing one is recommended when indoors or when you cannot stay 2 metres away from others, especially in crowded places.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched or shared surfaces and objects often.



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As an employer:

Actively encourage sick workers to stay home:

- Use a screening questionnaire from a public health agency and remind employees to stay at home if they have symptoms of COVID-19, even if mild.
- Have a flexible attendance policy to allow workers to stay home if they are sick or need to care for a sick family member.

Encourage healthy practices and prevention measures:

- Promote physical distancing of 2 metres and create physical barriers (e.g. plexiglass windows) when this is not possible.
- Provide increased hand hygiene stations that are easy to access by everyone, including those with disabilities.
- Encourage workers to clean and disinfect their personal work environments more often and provide them with the supplies to do so.
- Have clear written procedures on the use of the facility and equipment, cleaning and disinfecting, physical distancing, personal hygiene, non-medical masks, and other requirements.
- Post easy to understand signs and pictures to help people follow procedures.

Meet occupational health and safety obligations:

- Follow both public health and occupational health and safety guidelines that apply to your services and activities from federal, provincial, and municipal governments.
- Perform a hazard identification and risk assessment of your facilities and services to determine where and how to apply protection measures.
- Collaborate with your business associations on solutions.
- Involve your health and safety committee or representative when assessing workplace risks and determining personal protective equipment (PPE) and training.
- Provide adequate information, training, cleaning, disinfecting, use of non-medical masks, and determine any requirements for PPE.
- Have a policy to protect workers from violence and harassment. Clients may react aggressively to new protection measures or limited services.
- In the event of an emergency, plan how to respond as safely as possible with COVID-19 measures in place.



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Assessing Gym and Fitness Club Activities

Participation in gym and fitness club activities and services may involve close contact with other people and frequently touched surfaces. Follow guidance from local public health authorities and municipalities about the type of activities that are allowed, the number of people that can use the facilities, and other protective measures. Be aware that these measures may change as the pandemic continues.

Each gym and fitness club may have unique situations. Individually assess the risk for each activity and interaction. Consider the following:

- What activities do your workers do? Examples: reception and customer service, member orientation and consulting, coaching, training, food and retail, health and therapy services, gym equipment maintenance, cleaning, laundry, etc.
- How many people does each worker and member interact with, and how close are the physical interactions?
- How long is the interaction (i.e., the longer the length of time, the higher the risk)?
- Do workers and members frequently have contact with high touch surfaces?
- What fitness activities and equipment does the gym offer? Examples: free weights, weight and cardio machines, warm-up mats, circuit, yoga, spin, aerobics, etc.
- Is the fitness activity done by individuals separately or at the same time in a group setting?
- Does the activity involve intense physical effort (increased or forceful breathing)?
- Does the activity involve loud verbal instructions and music (shouting, yelling, singing)?
- Are classes with the same scheduled participants each time, or do participants drop in?
- Is equipment shared between members or assigned to a specific person or group?
- How much space is available for physical distancing?
- Are large open indoor or outdoor spaces available for meetings and workouts?
- Can equipment be moved or removed?
- Can members arrive ready to work out and leave immediately after, or is the use of a change room or shower facility required?

Communication

- Inform all members in advance about any new measures that are in place. This information can be shared online, through advertisements, with notices at the front doors, and verbally by staff.
- Help members understand that protective measures and reduced services are necessary, and that their fitness experience might be different. Ask them to be considerate of workers and other members.
- Make sure that all communications are suitable for people's age, ability, reading level, and language preferences.
- Post signs throughout the gym to encourage physical distancing, cleaning and disinfecting of equipment, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.
- Consider a website or phone-based advanced booking system to help manage the number of clients on site and to reduce waiting. Ask members not to arrive early for their booked time slot, and to leave promptly afterwards.
- Send any necessary forms, waivers, etc. electronically.
- Record the names and contact information of all workers and members in the gym and in each fitness class to assist with contact tracing if needed. Make sure that privacy is protected, and the list is only used for contact tracing purposes.



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Screening

- Post signage for members to not enter the gym if they may be sick, have been exposed to someone sick, or have just returned to Canada. To support this, provide a flexible no-penalty rescheduling policy.
- Consider asking screening questions before workers and members enter, using a checklist from your local public health authority, or have them complete a questionnaire.
- Establish procedures for people that become ill while at the gym. Make sure they are isolated until they can safely return home or be sent for medical attention. Consult with your local public health authority for guidance on next steps.

Physical Distancing

- Set occupancy limits for the gym. Calculate maximum occupancy using persons per floor area guidelines, and available room for spacing people and equipment at least 2 meters apart.
- Do not exceed the maximum gathering and event limits for your jurisdiction.
- Install physical barriers, screens, floor markings, and other visual cues where needed.
- Establish one-way routes where appropriate within the gym.
- Restrict access to areas of the facility that members do not need to go.
- Rearrange and limit use of seating areas, locker rooms, common areas, main lobbies, washrooms, etc. For example, block off some lockers, benches, washroom stalls, and sinks.
- Remove extra equipment and machines, increase the spacing between them, or take them out of service using barriers or signs.
- If 2 metre distancing is not possible, install plexiglass or other solid barriers between pieces of equipment, that are higher than head height.
- Position fitness equipment so users are not directly facing each other.
- Use greater distancing between aerobic equipment such as treadmills, ellipticals, and spin bikes.
- Designate space for each fitness class participant and workout station using floor markings.
- Explore whether fitness activities can be performed outdoors.
- Consider creating individual fitness stations with equipment for a complete workout, that can be reserved by a single user.
- Allow adequate time between each group or fitness class to minimize interactions between people, for air exchange, and for cleaning and disinfecting.
- Stagger fitness classes if there are several studios, to minimize crowding between classes.
- Do not rotate or share coaches and trainers during a workout. Have them involved with each individual client where possible.
- Consider additional measures to protect workers with risk factors for severe illness from COVID-19, such as allowing telework, or avoiding crowded or one-on-one situations.

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 gym, after using washrooms, before and after fitness activities, before and after touching shared equipment and surfaces, and after contact with another person.
- Encourage good respiratory etiquette. Sneeze or cough into a tissue or into the bend of your arm, instead of your hands.
- Encourage use of tissues and other means to prevent the spread of bodily fluids such as sweat. Immediately dispose of used tissues in lined garbage cans and follow up with hand hygiene.
- Consider having all persons carry their own hand sanitizer.



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- Avoid sharing equipment such as yoga mats and blocks.
- Arrive in fitness apparel to avoid using locker rooms.
- Consider not providing towel and laundry service. Ask members to bring their own towels.
- Encourage members to keep personal fitness equipment, clothing, and towels in a closed gym bag when not in use, and to minimize its contact with shared surfaces.
- If locker rooms are open, remove shared items such as scales and hair dryers.
- Steam rooms and saunas may need to remain closed. Check the guidance for your jurisdiction.
- Consider closing shower facilities. If not possible, stagger use, and clean and disinfect between each use. Wait at least 15 minutes after use before entering to clean and disinfect.
- Discourage food and drink sharing. Shut off water fountains or replace them with water bottle refill stations. Each person should have their own labelled water bottle.
- Discourage singing, yelling, and chanting.
- Discourage unnecessary physical contact such as handshakes and high fives.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Develop a cleaning and disinfection program with a schedule and checklists for all areas and equipment.
- Increase the frequency of routine cleaning and disinfecting.
- Clean and disinfect shared work areas, facilities, and tools between users or shifts.
- Focus on commonly touched objects and surfaces such as doors, counters, chairs, handles, railings, debit and ATMs, touchscreens, phones, light switches, faucets, taps, sanitizer dispensers, water bottle refill stations, and any protective barriers.
- Ensure that all gym equipment is cleaned and disinfected between each user.
- Place cleaning supplies and lined garbage cans near equipment.
- Consider creating 'Dirty/Clean' or colour-coded signs to clearly indicate equipment status.
- Remove soft furnishings and objects that cannot be easily cleaned.
- 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.
- Use a household or commercial disinfectant to destroy or inactivate the virus.
 - Use a disinfectant with a drug identification number (DIN). This number means that it has been approved for use in Canada.
 - Read and follow manufacturer's instructions for the safe use of products (e.g., wear gloves, use in well-ventilated area, allow enough contact time for disinfectant to kill germs based on the product being used).
 - If approved household or commercial disinfectant products are not available, hard surfaces can be disinfected using a mixture of 5 mL of bleach (5% sodium hypochlorite) and 250 mL of water. Test surfaces before using a bleach solution. Bleach can be corrosive. Follow instructions for safe handling of bleach.
 - If the use of liquids can be withstood, disinfect high-touch electronic devices (e.g., touch screens, pin pads, keyboards) with alcohol or disinfectant wipes.
- Clean so that when the surface is wiped, the surface still appears wet.
- Provide staff with training on cleaning and disinfecting procedures, adequate supplies, and access to required personal protective equipment. Check the product's safety data sheet or label for safe use instructions.
- Use dedicated re-useable cleaning materials (towels, sponges, mops, etc.) that can be washed using laundry soap and then dried completely.



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- Dispose of single-use tissues, wipes, gloves, and other cleaning materials in a plastic lined waste container. Empty garbage at least daily. Use disposable gloves when handling garbage.
- Replace garbage bins with no-touch receptacles or remove lids that require contact to open.

Ventilation

- Powerful portable cooling fans might increase the spread of COVID-19 in enclosed spaces. Use other ways to keep rooms cool, such as smaller class sizes, adjusting building ventilation systems, and air conditioning units.
- 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 (increase % of outdoor air in HVAC air supply, open windows and doors, etc.).
 - 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.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Continue to use PPE for existing occupational safety hazards and emergencies, as directed by applicable laws and your employer.
- Situations where PPE may be considered for protection from COVID-19 include:
 - Wearing gloves when cleaning as recommended by the product's safe work instructions or safety data sheet.
 - Wearing disposable gloves when cleaning blood or body fluids.
- If workers need to wear PPE, train them on how to wear, remove, work with, and care for the equipment, and to understand its limitations.
- Clean and disinfect any shared PPE before you wear it.
- Wash hands before wearing and after removing PPE.

Non-Medical Masks or Face Coverings

- Follow the mask recommendations as issued by your public health or other authority. Note that people may choose to wear masks regardless if there is a formal requirement.
- A mask should not be worn by anyone who is unable to remove it without assistance (e.g., due to their age or ability).
- Wear the mask correctly, making sure the nose and mouth are covered. Do not touch the mask while wearing it.
- Be aware that non-medical masks have limitations, and improper mask use and disposal can increase the risk of infection.
- Persons exerting themselves during fitness activities may not be able to wear a mask. Consider increasing physical distance.
- Change your mask if it becomes wet or soiled. You may wish to bring a second mask in a clean paper bag, envelope, or container that does not trap moisture. Store reusable soiled masks in a separate bag or container. Do not touch the outside of the mask while removing it and wash your hands when you are finished.
- Consider using a transparent mask or face shield, if appropriate, for clients that may require that visibility.
- Do not allow the mask to be a hazard to other activities, such as getting caught on moving machinery or equipment.



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Human Resources

- Notify workers in advance if there are changes to screening measures and policies.
- Set a clear policy for what is expected of workers if they get sick, have symptoms, or if an exposure is reported involving a member.
- On arrival each day, check-in and assess all workers using screening criteria from your local public health authority.
- Minimize contact during sign-in. Have the supervisor sign in for people (or provide separate pens), or have people text the supervisor. Clean any sign-in devices between users.
- Adjust worker schedules to reflect any necessary changes.
- If there are fewer workers 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 workers are trained to work safely, including when replacing the duties of others.
- Submit documents electronically, or wash hands after handling papers.
- Stagger meetings, breaks, mealtimes, and orientations.
- Hold meetings in an outside or large space.
- Hold verbal or electronic orientations.
- Limit sharing of equipment where possible, and clean and disinfect between users.
- Remove communal coat check areas and shared footwear or clothing. Allow workers to store their personal items separately or in sealed bins or bags if they do not have lockers.

External Service Providers

For visits by external services such as deliveries, contractors, and others:

- Communicate with service providers about your COVID-19 safety requirements before their visit, and work with them to meet their safety requirements.
- Maintain physical distancing as much as possible, minimize exposure to workers and members, wear non-medical masks, and provide hand washing facilities.
- Clean and disinfect the work area before and after the service provider does their work.

Coping with Social Isolation, Microaggression or Stigma

- When helping others, encourage them to talk to someone trained in mental health first aid, or someone else they trust about what they are experiencing.
- If an employee, ask the individual to contact their supervisor, employer, or employee assistance service, if available.
- Contact your local public health or community resources that offer mental health services.
- Check out organizations online:
 - Canadian Mental Health Association <https://cmha.ca/news/covid-19-and-mental-health>
 - Canadian Psychological Association <https://cpa.ca/psychologyfactsheets/>
 - Kids Help Phone <https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/were-here-for-you-during-covid-19-novel-coronavirus/>
- If you or someone you know is in crisis, please contact to your local hospital, call 911 immediately, or contact a Crisis Centre in your area. <https://suicideprevention.ca/need-help/>



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It is important that mental health resources and support are provided to all employees, including access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).



For further information on COVID-19, refer to the Public Health Agency of Canada
<https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus>

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.