

COVID-19 Proposed Reopening Guidelines for Nova Scotia Fitness Facilities

Introduction

These guidelines are to help prepare to reopen fitness facilities across Nova Scotia, including but not limited to private/publicly owned multiuse facilities, studios, bootcamp facilities, spin studios, yoga studios, personal training studios in the fitness industry to help prepare to offer services to the public once again. This document represents said fitness facilities in Nova Scotia however is not made up of an official association. It will be up to individual business owners and managers to make decisions using these guidelines and to implement the best practices for your businesses, your clients and your staff upon reopening. There are many different business situations in this industry. Please read these guidelines in their entirety in order to decide which situation best fits your personal and business circumstances. Not all the guidelines will apply to your individual situation. It will be up to individual business owners to decide at this time what to implement in individual facilities. Your safety, the safety of your clients/members and your staff comes first and foremost when deciding on any new protocols.

These guidelines are to be used as a reference for each facility to develop their own plan that accurately represents their individual business needs and offerings. These plans need to be kept on hand for inspection purposes.

At this time, access to saunas, steam rooms, pools and Jacuzzis will be restricted entirely.

Environment

Controlling Access and Space in Facilities

Controlling access to each fitness facility is of paramount importance. Once a patron has accessed a facility, maintaining appropriate social distancing is the responsibility of each facility and their staff members.

Entry to each fitness facility must be controlled via a specified entry and exit. Only one entry is recommended. No more than two entries and exits to a building are currently being recommended at this time due to the inability to adequately staff and control entry to a facility. If the entry and exit can be different locations, this is preferred to limit contact between patrons. Access to a facility must be for the purpose of utilizing the fitness facility services and not for any social reason. Patrons of the facility must sign into the facility and have a membership to the facility prior to using the facility services. Check-in to a facility must be contactless at this time. Consider the use of online platforms for check-in, limiting the number of staff at the front desk or entryway and using online payment methods if this is within the capacity of the facility (if this is not, minimum social distance of 6 ft must be maintained between staff and patrons upon check-in).

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Facilities that allow after hour access to members must implement controls to ensure social distancing is maintained, including but not limited to access by scheduled appointments only with a set number of slots per time. The facility may also choose to not allow access outside of normal business hours.

Utilize membership access tools (i.e.: use of swipe card, showing of membership card, verification of member). to provide a means to create a central collection point to help implement access controls.

Establish and control occupancy limits that ensure the physical distancing requirement can be maintained. See [the COVID-19 Working Safely](#) for guidance on establishing occupancy limits. Consider floor surface area, possible reconfiguration of accessible areas, and availability and type of equipment used when determining capacity limit.

There is a necessity for each facility to enable contact tracing protocols to ensure your facility has a registry of visitors via client registry(name, phone, date and time of visit) and a staff registry (date and time of work shifts) to enable accurate contact tracing by Public Health in the event of an exposure.

If additional strategies are needed to manage the number of people at the facility, consider using a booking system with set duration workout periods. Request that customers do not arrive more than 5 minutes before their appointment and coordinate appointment times to effectively manage the number of active users at one time and reduce wait times.

Each facility needs to enable a prescreening component for appointment-based patronage. Consider patron entry COVID-19 symptoms screening questionnaire to be given to every patron upon entrance to the facility.

Pre-screening is required when taking bookings or appointments.

Advise clients when they make an appointment that they cannot attend if they are feeling unwell the day of the appointment. The client should also be advised to use the 811 on-line self-assessment if they are unwell.

Place signs near entrances informing customers not to enter the facility if they are exhibiting symptoms. Ensure signage is placed at a location where it is visible, draws attention, and is readable.

Posting of Public Health Signage

All facilities, regardless of size and capacity will be required to post adequate signage in the facility detailing hygienic procedures, handwashing policies, social distancing policies and other important policies related to limiting the spread of COVID-19. Provincially required signs must be posted at all times. Additional infographics and signage specific to the services offered by the facility are highly recommended.

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Manage and direct where and how people can travel through your facility. This may include designating doorways for entrance and exit, also using one-way staircases or walkways where possible. Post signage indicating how these rules can be followed.

Ensure that workers and customers maintain physical distancing protocols. Mark spaces on the floor where people can stand at the front desk with intervals of 2 metres for customers to line up. If physical distance cannot be maintained, barriers such as plexiglass or polymer barriers, may be used.

Reconfigure waiting areas to maintain the physical distancing requirement (e.g., remove tables and chairs).

Remove non-essential items like magazines, stuffed toys and other items that cannot be cleaned from reception areas.

Ensure that social distancing/disinfection protocols are adhered to for any over the counter sales for admission, products sold, vending machines and pro shop items. Alter the display of items to eliminate the handling by customers.

Encourage the use of contactless payment methods. Ensure your hand hygiene policies include the requirement for workers to wash hands after handling cash, passes, membership cards, and other shared items.

Provide adequate handwashing or hand sanitizer stations for customers and staff to use upon entering the facility and when leaving.

Encourage frequent hand washing and good hygiene as per recommendations found here. <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/HandWashing-Poster.pdf>

Remove unnecessary communal items such as magazines, and complimentary phone chargers.

Provide a lined waste bin for customers to dispose of used sanitizing wipes and other safety equipment, such as masks and gloves, when entering and exiting the facility.

Communicate the facility's protocols to delivery people and couriers through signage posted at the workplace. These people are expected to follow the same procedures for physical distancing and hygiene that others at the workplace must follow.

Delivery drivers and couriers are also subject to the same restrictions prohibiting individuals who are sick, symptomatic, or in self-isolation from entering the workplace.

Encourage outdoors sessions where possible, ensuring social distancing requirements are maintained as well as prohibiting the usage of shared equipment.

Equipment

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Ensuring social distancing is critical to maintaining a safe and healthy environment in fitness facilities.

The following items are required to reopen a fitness facility and maintain social distancing

Ensuring signage is posted for physical distancing and instructions on cleaning equipment.

Provide hand hygiene stations available at entry and throughout facility;
Consider temporarily not offering towel service.

If linen service is still offered, establish policies to ensure all laundry is handled appropriately. Provide clearly marked laundry bins and ensure dirty linens are laundered before next use. Enhanced laundering practices are not required above the usual practices in place. There should be NO shared towels in the facility.

Clearly indicate how and who is responsible for cleaning equipment before and after using it. Ensure instructions and mechanisms in place for patrons to clean equipment safely. Facility staff should monitor/ensure thorough cleaning between use.

Increase space between individual users to ensure the distance between patrons stay at minimum two metres apart, for cardio, free weight, and all other fitness equipment/machines.

Orientation of equipment should be so that users are not face to face.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Effective cleaning and disinfection are essential to avoid the possible spread of COVID-19, which is spread through contact with respiratory droplets or contact with contaminated surfaces. The COVID-19 virus can survive for differing periods of time depending on the surfaces it lands on. Frequent cleaning and disinfection are necessary to prevent spread of the disease.

Cleaning products remove soiling such as dirt, dust and oils, but do not always sanitize surfaces. Disinfectants are applied after cleaning to sanitize resulting in the destruction of germs. Read, understand and apply the cleaning standards from the Health Canada guide on cleaning and disinfecting public spaces during COVID-19.

Proper disinfectant products:

Disinfectants with an 8-digit Drug Identification Number (DIN) are approved for use by Health Canada. During the pandemic, only the Health Canada-approved disinfectants with a virucidal claim are appropriate for the elimination of viruses in the clinic environment. The disinfectant product manufacturer's instructions must be followed for use, safety, contact time, storage and shelf life.

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Alternatively, per NS Dept of Health and Wellness cleaning guidelines, you can make a 1000ppm bleach water solution by mixing 20 ml (4 teaspoons) of unscented, household bleach with 1000 ml (4 cups) of water. Ensure the surface remains wet with the bleach water solution for 1 minute.

Vinegar, tea tree oil solutions, Thieves' oil and similar solutions are not proven to be effective disinfectants and cannot be used in place of Health Canada-approved disinfectants. It is a requirement that only approved disinfectants with a virucidal claim are used to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Be sure you and your staff take appropriate precautions when using chemicals for cleaning and disinfecting. This can be done by consulting the Manufacturer's Safety Data Sheets when using cleaners and disinfectants. Staff must be supplied with the appropriate safety equipment (gloves and masks) to protect themselves when they clean and disinfect.

The frequency of cleaning and disinfection is dependent on the nature of use/contact of the surface/item in question

Workplaces should implement enhanced environmental cleaning.

Commonly touched surfaces and shared equipment should be cleaned and disinfected after contact between individuals, even when not visibly soiled. This includes fitness equipment and machines, door handles, doorknobs, light switches, railings, elevator buttons, toilets, desks and tabletops etc.

Disinfectants for clients should be conveniently located. Patrons should be required to wipe down the equipment before and after use, with employees reinforcing and ensuring this practice is maintained. Discontinue the use of re-usable towels and cloths.

Ensure the disinfectant used in the facility is adequate for the elimination of viruses. Please see link for approved disinfectants <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19.html>

Workplaces should provide employees with resources such as tissues, no-touch trash receptacles, hand soap, alcohol-based hand sanitizers, disinfectants and disposable towels to promote a safe and hygienic work environment.

Provide adequate bins for the safe disposal of paper towels that have been used for cleaning and personal use. The bins should be lined with plastic bags, which are tied and disposed of regularly according to local refuse storage and collection requirements.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers should be approved by Health Canada (DIN or NPN number) to ensure they are effective.

Dispose of garbage on a regular basis. Wash hands after.

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Group Classes

Utilize Pre-screening protocol for appointments.

Ensure class times are staggered to allow for thorough cleaning by staff between usage. While allowing adequate time to disinfect equipment and surfaces before each class

Prohibit the use of shared equipment unless able to disinfect between users

Group classes should only be offered if physical distancing measures can be maintained.

Consider holding outdoor classes to ensure the 2 metre physical distancing requirement is maintained.

Encourage patrons to bring their own personal equipment, such as yoga mats, etc.

High-intensity classes may result in greater dispersion of droplets from each participant due to higher intensity breathing in addition to participant movement. Position instructors well away from participants, following social distancing guidelines of 2 metres minimum on the appropriate spacing between participants in these types of activities.

High-powered fans may result in greater dispersion of droplets. Consider further reducing class sizes to maintain room temperature at manageable levels without the use of high-powered fans.

Mark a designated exercise area for each client to stay inside of during a workout.

Remove unused equipment from group fitness rooms to create additional space for clients.

Personal Training

Consider the use of technology for virtual training where possible.
Utilize Pre-screening protocol for in person appointments.

Advise both clients and trainers to arrive close to their appointment time. Ensure that the waiting area is configured so that people can maintain physical distancing.

Ensure trainers and customers refrain from physical contact and adhere to the 2 metre physical distancing requirement from each other and other customers during the session when possible.

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If the trainer cannot maintain physical distancing, wear a clean non-medical mask or request a mask upon arrival to protect others. You may be required to purchase one at a minimal cost. There are many different types of masks. Please see this link for the appropriate use of non-medical mask or face covering.

https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirusinfection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html# Appropriate_nonmedical_mask

If a mask must be used, then they must be donned and doffed using the following specific sequence to prevent contamination:

Donning mask:

1. Perform hand hygiene.
2. Open mask fully to cover from nose to below chin.
3. Put on mask.
4. Secure ties to head (top first) or elastic loops behind ears.
5. Mold the flexible band to the bridge of nose (if applicable).
6. Ensure snug fit to face and below chin with no gaping or venting.

Doffing mask:

1. Perform hand hygiene.
2. Do not touch the front of the mask.
3. Carefully remove mask by bending forward slightly, touching only the ties or elastic loops. Undo the bottom tie first then undo the top tie.
4. Discard the mask in the garbage.
5. If the mask itself is touched during doffing, perform hand hygiene.
6. Never reuse masks.

It is essential that all users are aware of the proper donning and doffing of masks.

Where possible discourage training activities that necessitate close contact with other people (e.g., sparring in martial arts studios, and games in contact sports).

As much as possible, coaching sessions should be conducted in a manner that avoids touching clients. Consider using verbal cues while coaching or using technology to share instructional material and practice plans.

For activities involving direct contact, ensure that hand hygiene is practiced using handwashing before and after contact, if no handwashing can occur then use an alcohol-based hand rub.

Limit the number of personal trainers on site at any one time to ensure facility capacity is not exceeded. Ensure that this coincides with scheduling and overall occupancy in the facility.

Locker Rooms>Showers/Washrooms

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Establish and post occupancy limits of each area to ensure the physical distancing requirement can be maintained. Consider various means to control use such as assigning lockers, single use shower or washroom areas and or limit the number of units available for use.

Remove unnecessary items to facilitate the cleaning of these areas.

Remove complimentary shared personal items such as hairspray, hairdryers, and deodorant sprays.

Determine how people should move through these locations to maintain the physical distancing requirement. Tape can be used on the floor to designate walking and changing areas, and where possible identify one-way walkways to help ensure physical distancing.

Block off every other locker so that people don't need to stand close together to access their items and ensure that members are educated on the necessity to disinfect before and after usage, to be reinforced by regular cleaning by staff.

Recommended discontinue use of showers where possible and or limit their use to meet social distancing- one at a time and increased cleaning schedule. Shower curtains cannot be used as a barrier to replace social distancing.

Encourage patrons come in fully prepared for their activity, including wearing workout attire to discourage excessive usage of locker room areas.

Always keep toilets thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and monitor frequently throughout the day. □ Keep available disposable paper towel, liquid soap/hand sanitizer and always have hot water available in all washrooms. □ There should be NO shared towels for drying or washing hands in client or staff washrooms. Paper towel is best and should be discarded in a covered waste container.

Employees

Staff training should be held online if possible or in small groups with physical distancing measures in place. Ensure employees are prepared, educated and up to date on all new policies, rules and sanitation/disinfection processes required.

Facility must require that staff self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 at the start of every shift for possible symptoms. Advise staff that they cannot attend if they are feeling unwell the day of their shift. The staff member should also be advised to use the 811 on-line self-assessment if they are unwell.

Employees are required to practice physical distancing at work. Avoid handshakes and any other physical contact with others. Remain two metres apart from others whenever possible.

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Employees should wash their hands upon arrival at work and frequently throughout the day. Avoid touching your face, mouth, nose and eyes.

Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when hands are not visibly dirty and handwashing isn't available.

Only use hand sanitizer that is approved by Health Canada (DIN or NPN number).

If physical distancing cannot be maintained on the job (e.g. personal training and those assisting members with exercise), employees should wear a surgical/procedural mask. Please see link for appropriate donning and doffing of masks procedures.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/how-put-remove-clean-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html>

Support good hand hygiene – Remind staff to wash or sanitize hands frequently, particularly:

- Before and after preparing or eating food
- After handling waste, dirty linens/clothes or bathroom use
- After working with animals
- Whenever hands look dirty
- After shaking hands

Washing with soap and water is preferred – rubbing hands together removes visible dirt and germs. Use disposable paper towels (preferred) for drying hands or a reusable towel that you replace after use. If soap and water are not available (and hands are not visibly dirty), use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Use enough to cover the fronts and backs of both hands, between all fingers and rub hands together until they feel dry.

Use cough/sneeze etiquette.

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Dispose used tissues in the garbage and wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub immediately after

OR

- Cough/sneeze into your elbow, not your hand avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands Clean high-touch surfaces and objects often (at a minimum of twice daily or as needed)

Viruses can live on surfaces for several days. Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces and objects can reduce germs and prevent infection.

Clean and disinfect items like doorknobs, light switches, railings, elevator buttons, toilets, desks and tabletops daily – wash using soapy water, then disinfect using household cleaning products (follow the directions on the label) or a solution of 1-part bleach to 9-parts water

Disinfect phones, remote controls, computers and other handheld devices with 70% alcohol or wipes • Wash or launder linens, clothing and uniforms on a regular basis.

Dispose of garbage on a regular basis. Wash hands after.

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Sources:

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<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/re-open-saskatchewan-plan/guidelines/gyms-and-fitness-facilities-guidelines>

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