



Recreation Facility  
Association  
of Nova Scotia

## Gathering Limit Increase for Participants in Sport and Performing Arts FACT SHEET & FAQ's

**Announced on Friday, September 18, gathering limits for sport and performing arts activities increased to 50 without physical distancing as of October 1<sup>st</sup>.**

The expectation for the limit increase is to allow most sports, organized physical activity, rehearsals, and arts performances to resume, so more people can get out and be active, safely.

### Core Public Health Directives:

**These remain unchanged and consistent in messaging.**

- Ensure physical distancing
- Practice good hygiene (hand sanitizer, handwashing, avoid touching your face, disinfect frequently touched surfaces)
- Stay informed, be prepared, and follow public health advice
- Limit non-essential travel
- Increase environmental cleaning and ventilation of public spaces and worksites
- Stay home and away from others when symptomatic and follow public health advice
- Wear a non-medical mask in indoor public places, on public transportation and outdoors when physical distancing is not possible to maintain.

### **The increase specifics:**

The gathering limit increase from 10 to 50 without physical distancing **applies to:**

- Players/participants, officials, coaches, instructors, or anyone else who is required to be on or near the "field of play".
- Performers, directors, cast, crew, or anyone else required to be within the performance space
- Practises, competitions, and games
- Provincial Sport Organizations
- Recreational League Sports (e.g. adult hockey; regular rentals with consistent participants)
- Organized physical activity (e.g. drop-in activities such as open swims and skates)
- Change rooms and dressing rooms are also included in this increase as it applies to open swims and ice participants

***While mask use is not required while doing physical activity, wearing masks where appropriate and maintaining distance as much as possible, even when the activity does not require participants to physically distance, continues to be encouraged.***

This gathering limit increase **does not apply to:**

- Unorganized or casual games, that are more social in nature, like pickup basketball or soccer in the park. These activities must adhere to existing gathering rules of groups of 10 without physical distancing within a maximum of 50 **with** physical distancing.
- Singing and playing brass and wind instruments. These activities should continue to gather in groups of 10 and keep physically distanced in larger groups.
- Fitness and yoga programs as their facilities continue to have their own guidelines.
- The gathering limits for day camps and after school programs, they remain at 15.

## Spectators

- This increase does not change the gathering limits for spectators, which remains at 50% capacity of a facility to a maximum of 200 indoors and up to 250 outdoors if the event is organized by a recognized business or organization.
- If **NOT** coordinated by a recognized business or organization, they are limited to 50.
- Physical distancing is still required in all these scenarios, except among people in the same household or social group of 10.
- **Reminder** that each facility is unique with different sizes and capacities and will have their own reopening plans with different rules in place.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. The 50% capacity up to 200 for a facility, does it include both the spectators and those on the ice?

Yes. (See the examples below). However, because each facility is unique, they will determine their capacity based on their ability to manage it. As a result, facilities do not have to allow the maximum capacity for spectators into their facility if they feel they are not able to manage those numbers. Facilities have the choice to not allow any spectators or any amount up to the maximum number their facility is calculated to handle.

#### *Example 1:*

The Fire Marshal says the capacity of your facility is 100. 50% of your capacity would put you at 100 spectators. 50 of those would be on the ice and 50 would be left spectators.

#### *Example 2:*

The capacity of your facility is 1000 people. So, 50% of your capacity would be 500. You could then have 50 people on the ice and 200 spectators in the stands.

### 2. Does sport=recreation or does this increase apply only to groups who have Provincial Sport Organization (PSO)?

This is a bit of a gray area, but the important thing is the consistency of the group. Having consistent groups of participants is important. If it is something scheduled, not ad hoc, and it is the same group every rental, they do not have to be associated with a PSO.

### 3. Does this increase apply to day camps or afterschool programs?

No, this does not apply to day camps or afterschool programs. There are separate guidelines for day camps and afterschool programs which need to be followed. Click here for a link:

[COVID-19 Return to Day Camp Guidelines](#)

### 4. Are you able to increase the number of 10 for drop-in gym times under this increase?

It would depend on the nature of the event. The key is having the ability to contact trace with a registration list. We are able to have open /drop in type swims and skates and they would be considered similar. The important thing would be that if you go to a public swim/skate you should register or sign up so there is a way to know who attended and who was in the facility.

This is different than referring to drop-in activities in the sense where it is wide open without a formal registration.

**5. What does this increase mean for facilities that are not arenas? For example, a community centre – if a recreation department hosts a drop-in pickle ball program are we able to have more than 10 participants without physical distancing?**

The term drop-in implies lack of consistency of the group and no protocols in place. Without consistency from session to session you would be limited to the 10. If you had consistency by registering or signing up and if there were protocols in place, then you may be able to increase the gathering limit.

**6. Is there a requirement stating how long renters or facilities should keep their contact tracing information?**

It has not been established but there is 14-day window that is particularly important. It has been suggested that the information should be held for a minimum of 21 days in case public health needs to collect the information if a potential exposure is identified.

**7. Do participants need to wear masks when going from the dressing room to the ice surface? (E.g. hockey players and/or open skate participants)**

No, once they leave the dressing room in full equipment to go to the ice surface, they do not have to wear a mask.

**8. During a drop-in swim or skate, can people come and go with more than 50 attending but only having 50 in the pool or on the ice a time?**

The spirit of the 50 is that it should be no more than 50. If someone attends a public skate or swim and many more than the 50-total pass through, then your attendees who have stayed for the whole activity will then have been exposed to more than the 50 limit. The management of the number 50 should be the limit of the entire swim or skate.

**9. Fitness facilities have been excluded in this increase. There is contact tracing, pre-registration, cleaning protocols, etc. happening for fitness classes. Fitness classes are now very limited in numbers due to the size of the rooms. There does not seem to be a reason to limit the number to 10 if other sporting events, which are full contact, are allowing 50.**

This is about choices. There is an ability for fitness class activities to happen with groups of 10 or with maintaining physical distancing. We are still in a pandemic so this about trying to move forward activities that could not operate under the group of 10 restrictions.

**10. Is adult hockey expected to also do the health screening and fill out the Hockey Nova Scotia screening registry?**

All hockey groups, whether adult or youth, even if they are not affiliated with Hockey Nova Scotia, are required to follow the HNS Return to Play Plan. It has been encouraged by HRM for groups to use the

templates, COVID pre-screening, contact tracing, etc. resources on the HNS website. Adult recreation leagues are required to do it just as the minor sport groups are.

**11. With parents not allowed in dressing rooms how do we address the issue of tying skates?**

Some facilities are providing spaces just inside the facilities so parents can tie the skates before they get to the dressing rooms. Some participants are also coming to the facilities with skates and skate guards on.

**12. Are staggered ice times required? If no, if there are 50 people on ice and 200 in stands, the next group using dressing rooms, would they count towards the 50 or the 200?**

This is an important aspect with regard to the timing of entering and exiting the facility in a timely fashion. There need to be steps taken to manage the participant and crowd flow so there is no overlap if you are at the maximum capacity allowed. The biggest challenge will be at the transition points between rentals.

In the case of HRM, they have implemented:

- limits on only entering 5 minutes prior to watch
- participants entering 15 minutes prior to play
- vacating spectators as soon as the event ends
- vacating participants no later than 15 minutes after the rental end time
- plus only allowing 1 spectator per participant up to a maximum of 50

This puts HRM in position to never be at the maximum number capacity in most cases and limits the possibility of the entering group and the vacating group from interacting.

**13. How does an open swim differ from drop-in basketball?**

Depending on the circumstances around the drop-in event, if there is the ability to have people register and have consistency in the group and have contact tracing, a case could be made that drop-in programs could happen if they have that organization. They could be considered very similar to an open skate or swim. It would be up to the facility if they feel confident that they can manage those types of programs under COVID protocols.

There is a difference between going into a facility for a drop-in program and going to the park. The facility has the ability to do cleaning, screening, etc. versus a group going a park and just deciding to play because a few people are around to scrimmage.

**14. Do you have to pre-register to attend public or open swims or skates?**

This depends on the facility. Some facilities have the ability to do pre-registration for those types of events and some do not. Some facilities may have staff or operators available to manage screening, collecting contact tracing, etc. if there is no pre-registration and some do not. It will all depend on the capacities, capabilities, and resources of individual facilities on how they handle this. Expect each facility to handle it differently.

**15. Can a program such as yoga and fitness classes increase their number to 50 if the program requires registration and if the groups can stay consistent?**

These activities must stay at the groups of 10 unless the space being used can accommodate up to a maximum of 50 with physical distancing.

[COVID-19 Reopening Guidelines for Nova Scotia Fitness Facilities](#)

**16. If parents in HRM have children participating in back to back practices will the parents still need to exit after the first practice and re-enter 5 minutes before the next practice?**

Yes, that will be the requirement.

**17. Can we clarify pick up versus drop-in?**

Recreational groups (such as adult hockey) who play on a regular basis with a consistent group of players and who has someone designated as an organizer and responsible for the group would fall into the category of pick up. . This way contact tracing can occur, screenings can take place, and there is a contact for the facility, etc. Again, the important piece to consider is that the participants in this group are the same people each rental and stay consistent throughout.

Drop-in is where you can show up with no pre-registration, pay a fee and play. There is inconsistency in who plays, there is no registration, and every time you play there are different participants. With no organizer it would be up to the facility to look after contact tracing and screening.

**18. Does public health have any guidance on how to handle hockey tournaments especially within facility guidelines and gathering limits? HNS is encouraging tournaments to begin in November which would stress the facilities capacities and resources.**

Guidelines on how to support tournaments and things to consider when thinking about a tournament are being worked on. This will take a coordinated approach as we recognize the benefits of tournaments but also realize the facilities are all different and tournaments must also follow the individual facility plans.

**19. Is it the responsibility of the arena operator to ensure pre-screening's are done for open skates?**

For public skates it is the responsibility of the facility to ensure screening are done. It will be a challenge, and potentially unlikely that facilities who only have an operator on staff will be able to manage these types of events. Even in cases where the facility is well staffed, staff may have to be brought in or be made available to complete the screening and contact tracing requirements.

**20. Will we be able to open our showers?**

It is up to each facility to decide if and how they will allow access to dressing rooms, showers, and handle transition time before and after each rental, etc. There have not been any guidelines or restrictions put in place with regard to use of showers, However, you can reference the *COVID-19 Reopening Guidelines for Nova Scotia Fitness Facilities* ( <http://www.rfans.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19-Reopening-Guidelines-for-Nova-Scotia-Fitness-Facilities-June-4.pdf> ) which were reviewed and supported by Public Health. It does reference lockers rooms, showers, and washrooms and those guidelines have not changed for fitness facilities. The only difference for an arena or pool is that you can now have up to 50 in the change rooms to accommodate your groups participating on the field of play.

### **21. Are we required to have a gap between rentals?**

No specific rules have been put in place around staggering rentals, etc. but you must keep in mind that you will need time to transition groups in and out without going over the limit of 50 in the dressing rooms/on the field of play and the maximum capacity for your facility which includes spectators. Remember, each facility is unique with different sizes and capacities and will have their own reopening plans with different rules in place

### **22. Are individuals who are essential workers (truck drivers, etc.) allowed to enter the arenas? If so, can facilities prohibit entrance?**

Essential workers are not required to self isolate, if they have travelled outside the Atlantic bubble for business purposes. They have an exemption granted from Public Health, which should be recognized. (Even with the exemption they still need to follow [social distancing guidelines](#). They need to monitor their symptoms closely, and self-isolate if they start to feel sick.)

Link to Exemptions from self-isolation <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/restrictions-and-guidance/#exemptions>

Reminder though that each facility is unique with different capacities to manage. Depending on their ability to manage, facilities will have their own reopening plans with different rules in place.

### **23. Are spectators allowed to sit together as long as they are in groups of 10 or less (as per public health guidelines)?**

Physical distancing is still required in all scenarios, except among people in the same household or social group of 10.

**Reminder** that each facility is unique with different capacities and abilities to manage and will have their own reopening plans with different rules in place.

### **24. If a spectator/player/coach has an exemption from the government from wearing a mask, are facilities allowed to prohibit entrance?**

Wearing a non-medical mask is required in most indoor public places. Public places include:

- places for cultural or entertainment activities and services (like movie theatres, theatre performances, dance recitals, festivals, and concerts)
- places for sports and recreational activities, including fitness establishments, like pools, gyms, yoga studios, climbing facilities and indoor tennis facilities (except during an activity where a mask cannot be worn)

People with a valid medical reason for not wearing a mask are exempt.

<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/masks/#Exemptions>

**Reminder** that each facility is unique with different sizes and capacities and will have their own reopening plans with different rules in place. Some facilities may have their own policy on this.

**25. Where do outdoor rinks fall? Are they like a playground or skatepark? Most outdoor rinks do not have staff and are open to the public.**

An outdoor rink without staff would be considered the same as a playground or skatepark. They would follow the gathering limit with [social distancing](#) for unorganized physical activity that are not run by a recognized business or organization - 50 people maximum indoors and outdoors (participants can have incidental close contact with each other if it's infrequent, brief and can't be avoided).

**Reminder** of the key messages that continue to be part of the Covid-19 response:

- people should still be keeping to small groups of 10 for close contact and keeping as much distance as possible.
- It is important for everyone to take ownership of their own health and make decisions and take action to keep themselves safe
- Maintain a safe distance from others
- wear a mask indoors and outdoors when distancing isn't always possible to maintain
- use hand sanitizer if there's limited access to handwashing, and
- avoid touching your face

These measures have an impact not just on personal health, but on the community as well.

**Additional Resources**

- **Gathering Limits for Participants in Performing Arts, Sport to Increase News Release**
- **Information on Spectator Limits FAQ's**
- **COVID-19 Return to Recreation (Program and Facility) Guidelines**
- **RFANS COVID-19 Resources**
- **COVID-19 Re-opening Guidelines**
- **Coronavirus (COVID-19): reopening (Government of Nova Scotia)**