

## COVID-19 Guidance for Recreational Water Facilities

Recreational water facilities including, public pools, spas, wading pools and splash pads, are required to operate according to [Ontario Regulation 565 – Public Pools](#). The following recommendations are intended to help owners and operators of these recreational water facilities reduce the spread of COVID-19. As every facility will be different, it is ultimately the responsibility of owners and operators to review their own policies, procedures and site-specific circumstances, and assess their ability to deliver aquatic programs and activities while ensuring that the appropriate infection prevention and control measures are implemented and maintained.

Recreational water facilities are currently subject to the Province of Ontario's [Emergency Order](#) made under the [Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act](#). On June 24, 2020, certain categories of businesses and facilities will be permitted to reopen when Toronto enters Stage 2 of [Ontario's Reopening Framework](#). However, it is important to note that all indoor and outdoor spas and water slides will not be permitted to open at this time. Owners and operators should prepare their facilities to comply with these public health guidelines and/or other provincial requirements such that they are ready to reopen safely.

More information about COVID-19 can be found in the Toronto Public Health (TPH) [COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#).

### Before Re-Opening

#### Notification of facility opening or re-opening

- Owners and operators of public recreational water facilities are required to notify TPH before opening/reopening a facility after any closure that lasts for more than four weeks, or before a facility is put into use after construction or alteration.
- Notification must be received at least 14 days prior to the intended date of opening and can be completed online using TPH's [Recreational Water Facility Opening Notification Form](#).

#### Train staff

- All lifeguards and other recreational water facility staff must be aware of the [signs and symptoms](#) associated with COVID-19.
- Train staff on the proper use of personal protective equipment, when required. Refer to [Public Health Ontario](#) resources.
- Train staff on safety measures to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission during first aid and resuscitation. For additional information, consult industry experts such as the [Lifesaving Society](#) and the [Red Cross](#).

#### Prepare the recreational water facility

- Owners and operators should assess the layout and available space within the facility. Facilities should allow for all staff, bathers and spectators to maintain a two metre (six feet) distance from each other.
- Determine the facilities reduced capacity limit at any given time (i.e. bather load) that permits adequate physical distancing.

- Post notices indicating the facility capacity limit in visible locations throughout the facility (e.g. entrances, at pool/spa, deck, changerooms and showers).
- Reduce the capacity of the resting areas and in spectator areas:
  - Provide furniture (e.g. chairs, benches, picnic tables) to accommodate the reduced facility capacity.
  - Arrange furniture a minimum of two metres (six feet) apart, and place signs/notices in fixed seating spaces such as spectator areas.
  - Mark furniture locations so that they may be repositioned easily (e.g. tape/paint on the floor).
- Provide physical cues or guides for people by placing markers such as tape, stickers, safety cones or painted lines every two metres (six feet), where appropriate (e.g. entrances, service counters and showers).
- Tape off and temporarily decommission high-contact aquatic features such as slides, diving boards and climbing structures.
- Consider installing cues such as stickers or signs at frequently touched surfaces (e.g. splash pad water feature activation buttons) to encourage persons to avoid directly touching with their hands (e.g. use your elbow or the back of your hand).
- Increase ventilation and air flow in areas, if possible.
- Download, print and post signs in a visible location at the entrance and other appropriate areas in the facility to raise awareness about health and safety measures that can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 such as:
  - [Physical Distancing](#)
  - [Protect Yourself](#)
  - [Information about COVID-19](#)
  - [Wash your Hands](#)
  - [Cover your Cough](#)
  - [Poster for Entrances](#)

### Screening considerations for recreational water facilities

- For facilities with a Class A or Class B pool that is supervised:
  - It is strongly recommended that owners and operators of facilities with a Class A or Class B pool that is supervised conduct active in-person [health screening](#) for all staff, bathers and spectators entering the facility.
  - Designate an area outside, near the main entrance of the recreational water facility as a screening station for in-person screening.
    - The area should be clearly identifiable as the screening station.
    - Post signs in a visible location clearly explaining the screening process and the rules and conditions for entry (see the [Posters for Entrances](#) as an example).
    - Post signage containing information on the signs and [symptoms of COVID-19](#).
  - The area must allow for a minimum of two metres (six feet) distance between staff conducting in-person screening and the individual being screened.
  - Alternatively, a protective barrier (e.g. plexiglass) may be equipped around the screening station.
  - If physical distancing or a barrier is not possible, staff conducting the screening may consider wearing personal protective equipment (e.g. mask, eye protection).

- Use visual markers/cues spaced two metres (six feet) apart (e.g. tape on the floor, pylons, signs) to assist staff, bathers and spectators maintain a two metre distance from each other if waiting to be screened.
- For facilities with an unsupervised Class B pool, spa, wading pool or splash pad:
  - For unsupervised facilities, where in-person screening cannot be conducted by staff on-site, encourage staff, bathers and spectators to [self-screen](#) for COVID-19 symptoms and exposures prior to entry.

### Modify the facility to promote physical distancing

- Temporarily decommission showers immediately adjacent to each other.
- Limit lockers available by blocking certain lockers from use.
- Use other engineering controls such as plexiglass, tables or barriers where physical distancing is difficult to maintain.

### During Active Operation

#### Stay home when you're sick

- Remind staff, bathers and spectators to stay at home and not attend the recreational water facility if they are sick.
- Visit our webpage to learn about the [symptoms](#) associated with COVID-19.

#### Implement an attendance reporting policy for staff

- Daily attendance records should be maintained and updated when a staff member is absent.
- Owners and operators should follow-up with staff to determine the reason for any unplanned absences.
- Determine if a staff person's absence is due to illness, and note any symptoms (e.g. fever, sore throat, feeling unwell).
- Refer to the Ministry of Health's [COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms](#).
- Advise staff to call Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000, or their primary care provider to determine if further care is required. COVID-19 testing is readily available at [assessment centres](#).
- Monitor attendance records for patterns or trends (e.g. staff on the same shifts or over the course of a few days).

#### Staff that become ill with symptoms of COVID-19 while at work

- Staff who become ill while at work should be sent home immediately, and directed to our [website](#) for more information about COVID-19.
- Staff exposed to a **confirmed case of COVID-19** will be excluded from work for 14 days.
  - These individuals should also [self-isolate](#) and [monitor for symptoms](#) for the next 14 days. They should be advised to avoid contact with vulnerable persons or settings where vulnerable persons reside (e.g. long-term care homes).
- Staff with symptoms of COVID-19 should call Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000, their health care provider or an [assessment centre](#) to determine if they need testing.
- Symptomatic staff who test negative for COVID-19 must be excluded from work until 24 hours after symptoms have stopped.

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- Staff who are being managed by TPH (i.e. confirmed cases of COVID-19, household contacts of cases) should follow TPH instructions to determine when they can return to work.
- Staff should also report to their Occupational Health and Safety Department prior to return to work.
- Tests for clearance to return to work are not necessary.

### Screen staff, bathers and spectators for signs and symptoms of COVID-19

- For facilities with a Class A or Class B pool that is supervised:
  - Actively screen staff, bathers and spectators upon arrival or prior to the start of a shift. See TPHs [sample screening form](#) that can be used.
  - Individuals can be asked the screening questions or can complete a screening form prior to entry.
  - Make alcohol-based hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration) available for use at the screening station for individuals who have answered **NO** to all questions prior to entry into the facility.
  - Individuals who answer **YES** to any of the questions should not be permitted to enter the facility.
  - Encourage individuals with symptoms to visit TPHs [website](#) to learn about [assessment centres](#), and to help determine if further health care is required.
- For facilities with an unsupervised Class B pool, spa, wading pool or splash pad:
  - For unsupervised facilities, where in-person screening cannot be conducted by staff on-site, encourage staff, bathers and spectators to [self-screen](#) for COVID-19 symptoms and exposures prior to entry.

### Maintain logs of staff, bather and spectator contact information

- It is recommended that facilities with a Class A or Class B pool keep logs of the name and contact information for staff, bathers and spectators, with a date, check in and check out time.
- If there is a case of COVID-19 who was contagious while at the facility, public health will use that list to notify the staff and customers.

### Manage the flow of people in the facility to promote physical distancing

- Monitor to ensure adherence to the reduced capacity limit.
- Where appropriate, design and implement a walking flow for the facility, such as creating one-way routes with prominent signage and/or floor markings to prevent crowding (e.g. showers, changerooms, pool deck).
- Establish and monitor capacities for changerooms at any given time to prevent crowding.
- Design and implement a swimming flow for the pool to encourage physical distancing between staff, bathers and spectators such as creating one-way swimming lanes with prominent signage and/or deck markings for lane swims.
- Stagger the flow of people entering and exiting the facility to prevent crowding.
- Stagger times for lap swims, practices and other activities or programs.
- Aquatic activities such as fitness classes and swim lessons must be in line with physical distancing measures. For example, only other household members can assist bathers with physical contact.
- Consider implementing appointments or time limits for the use of the facility so that facility capacity is more easily controlled.

### Practice hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette

- [Wash your hands](#) thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration), provided hands are not visibly soiled.
  - Encourage staff, bathers and spectators to practice hand hygiene prior, during and after use of the recreational water facility.
  - Remind staff, bathers and spectators to avoid touching their face, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- [Cover your cough](#) or sneeze with a tissue. If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve.
- Ensure that staff, bathers and spectators have the ability to practice hand hygiene often, and when needed:
  - Provide hand sanitizer in dispensers near entrances, service counters and other high-touch locations for staff, bather and spectator use.
  - Monitor supplies to ensure adequate amounts of liquid soap, paper towel (air dryer if paper towels are not available), hand sanitizer, tissues and waste receptacles with lined plastic bags.

### Practice physical distancing

- [Physical distancing](#) means keeping a distance of two meters (six feet) from others who are not part of your household or social circle.
- Remind staff, bathers and spectators not to share items, including food, water bottles, equipment, toys, and supplies and encourage everyone to keep their distance as best as possible.
- Staff, bathers and spectators must maintain physical distancing in all areas of the facility (e.g. in the water, on the deck, in showers).
- Discourage crowding by advising facility users to return at another time if physical distancing is difficult or not possible.

### Consider using cloth masks or face coverings

- [Cloth masks or face coverings](#) are strongly recommended when physical distancing cannot be maintained. Masks can be worn on the deck or other areas of the facility.
- Masks do not replace the need for physical distancing, hand washing, and staying home when sick.
- Masks should not be worn in the water, placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

### Enhance environmental cleaning and disinfection

- Implement enhanced environmental cleaning and disinfection policies and procedures.
- Ensure frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces and objects such as ladders, doorknobs, handrails, light switches, deck fixtures, etc., at least twice a day and when visibly dirty.
- Ensure locker rooms, change rooms, showers and washrooms are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary environment.
- Rescue equipment (e.g. throwing-aids, reaching poles) and shared equipment (e.g. lifejackets, flutter boards, clip boards) should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- Review Public Health Ontario's [Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#) fact sheet.
- Refer to Health Canada's [list of hard-surface disinfectants](#) for information on disinfectants effective against COVID-19.

- Maintain a log to track cleaning and disinfecting activities.

### **Lifeguards and water safety**

- Physical distancing must not compromise safety supervision or the bathers safety (e.g. rescues, first aid).
- To ensure the safety of all spectators, lifeguards who are actively providing safety supervision should not be expected to monitor adherence to measures outlined in this document (e.g. physical distancing, screening). These responsibilities should be assigned to another staff member.
- For additional information, consult industry experts such as the [Lifesaving Society](#) and the [Red Cross](#).

### **Provision of personal protective equipment**

- Lifeguards and other recreational water facility staff should wear personal protective equipment (e.g. face mask, gloves) appropriate for the work being performed (e.g. first aid).

### **Maintain water filtration and disinfection systems**

- Adequate filtration and disinfection of water should remove or inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Ensure the facility's water filtration and disinfection systems (i.e. with chlorine or bromine) are maintained and operating properly.
- Where required, disinfectant levels in public pools, spas, wading pools and splash pads must be maintained according to [Ontario Regulation 565 – Public Pools](#).

### **Maintain heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems**

- Ensure the HVAC system(s) for the facility, deck or relevant area(s) are adequately maintained.
- Increase the introduction and circulation of outdoor air by opening windows and doors, the use of fans, or other methods, where possible. However, do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk to staff, bathers or spectators.
- If fans are used, they must be positioned to provide an upward movement of air.

### **Increase communication with staff, bathers and spectators**

- Develop and implement communication platforms to provide information about programs, health and safety measures (e.g. screening, physical distancing, staying home when sick) with spectators and staff through the facilities website, email or social media accounts.
- Designate a point of contact (e.g. supervisor) who will be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns from staff, bathers and spectators.

### **Workplace health and safety**

- Employers must have written measures and procedures for staff safety, including for infection prevention and control.
- Ontario has general information on [COVID-19 and workplace health and safety](#), where employers can learn about their responsibilities and how to protect workers at work.
- Workers can also get information about [health and safety protections](#) at the workplace.

## Other Resources

[COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#)

[COVID-19 Guidance for Employers, Workplaces and Businesses](#)

[Lifesaving Society – Guide to Reopening Pools and Waterfronts](#)

[Public Pool, Public Spa and Class C Facilities Operator's Manual](#)

## More Information

For more information, visit our website at [www.toronto.ca/COVID19](http://www.toronto.ca/COVID19) or call us at 416-338-7600.

## References

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) - Considerations for Aquatic Venues*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/parks-rec/aquatic-venues.html>

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