

Fact sheet for Sports Activities and Facilities during COVID-19

May 3, 2022

Introduction: Preparing for success

This fact sheet is designed to help develop safety policies and procedures for sports activities and facilities. It is intended to supplement the [Guidance for indoor public settings during COVID-19](#), which you should read for additional safety information that is not included here.

Activities related to organized sports have the potential to enhance COVID-19 transmission. Specifically, close contact, forceful exhalation, prolonged exposure, crowded indoor spaces, and masks and face coverings removed during physical activity contribute to enhanced likelihood of COVID-19 transmission.

Public health measures must include staying home if you are sick, handwashing, and covering coughs and sneezes. They may also include physical distancing, wearing a mask, and showing proof of vaccination.

In addition to the guidance in this document, consult the current [government of Ontario restrictions and guidance](#), as well as your [national](#) and [provincial](#) sport organizations.

Keep in mind that in general, it is safest to conduct fitness virtually or outdoors when possible.

Policies and procedures at your organization

Safety measures for workers: Who is a worker?

Workers include, but are not limited to, staff, volunteers, contractors, vendors, and delivery drivers. **Even though most sports associations are volunteer-run, they still have workers.** Follow the safety practices in the section “Safety Measures for Workers” of the [Guidance for indoor public settings during COVID-19](#).

Masks

If your organization decides to continue requiring masking, masks may be removed when engaging in an athletic or fitness activity. However, masks may be required when not engaging in an athletic or fitness activity, including waiting to use a fitness machine or stepping on and off the machine.

Masks are required for some people and may not be removed in indoor public settings, including during fitness activities:

- For people whose [symptoms](#) have started or who have tested positive for [COVID-19](#) in the past 10 days.
- For people who are [close contacts](#) of someone with COVID-19 or who live with someone who is ill.

Consider maintaining a 2-meter physical distance

Maintaining physical distancing is no longer required. However, many fitness activities are considered high risk due to forceful exhalation and prolonged exposure to others when masks are not worn. Maintaining options for physical distancing can help protect everyone in the facility, and physical distancing may be especially important for vulnerable people such as pregnant people, seniors, people with disabilities, immunocompromised people, and children who are too young to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

The highest risk is posed by high-intensity indoor activities, including fitness classes (for example, treadmills, elliptical, spin class, dance, hot yoga, boot camp). Consider maintaining physical distancing for these activities, especially if vulnerable people participate in the activity.

It is recommended to conduct physical activity in an area that is large enough for participants to be physically distanced, if they prefer to do so.

If you decide to maintain physical distancing, here are some points to consider:

- Modify activities if needed.
- Adjust traffic flow. For example, designate separate entrance and exit doors and create one-way walk flow.
- Install floor markings. Floor markings can be used to designate individual workout areas in fitness classes, to indicate a space between participants in a change room, to designate waiting areas in a registration or washroom line, or in any other area where crowding may be an issue.
- Where spotting is necessary for weightlifting, participants and trainers should consider wearing a mask.

You may decide to support physical distancing by changing room layout:

- If different activities are conducted in a shared space like a gymnasium, fieldhouse, or fitness room, the activities could be kept separate.
- Reconfigure the layout of fitness areas and equipment. Install physical barriers if distancing is not possible.
- If equipment cannot be moved and positioning will result in participants being within a 2-meter distance, consider blocking off every other piece of equipment or erecting barriers such as plexiglass between equipment.
- Remove unnecessary furniture to free up more space. Chairs and tables can be stacked and roped off or removed to promote distancing. Consider leaving a small number of chairs accessible in case participants need to rest.
- Designate areas for fitness activities and for the flow of participants. Create designated areas based on function, and use tape on the floor to define these areas. For example, use tape to define hallways in a weight room and separate stretching areas from areas for movement (such as heaving rope and tire-flipping zone).

Cheering, shouting, and singing

Cheering loudly, shouting, and singing are high-risk activities.

- Workers, including fitness instructors and coaches, may be provided with microphones to reduce the need for shouting.
- Spectators should be discouraged from shouting and cheering loudly, especially indoors.

Group celebrations

- Avoid activities like handshakes, high-fives, fist bumps, and chest bumps.
- At after-parties or post-game celebrations, frequently people relax and do not maintain distancing or masking that may have been in place during the fitness activity. This is when COVID-19 has an opportunity to spread. Continue to follow public health measures during team celebrations.

Travel

People traveling for fitness activities and competitions should be aware of travel restrictions in the districts that they are travelling to and from. When booking travel, consider that restrictions can change with short notice. During your trip, follow public health guidelines. Consult [THU's travel recommendations webpage](#) for resources about international travel and testing requirements, as well as for local resources about where to get a test.

Site-specific considerations

Lockers and change rooms

Encourage participants to minimize time spent in locker rooms.

Group classes

- Physical distancing is no longer required for group classes. However, it is recommended to conduct group classes in an area that is large enough for participants to be physically distanced, if they prefer to do so. This is especially important for high-intensity activities.
- Consider holding outdoor classes to increase ventilation and to make it possible for participants to be physically distanced, if they prefer to do so.

Indoor tracks

- Walkers and runners should travel in the same direction on the track.
- Encourage outdoor walking and running wherever possible.
- Since the standard indoor track lane is 1.22 meters wide, consider limiting use to every second lane to maintain physical distancing.

Water facilities

Swimming pools and whirlpool spas must notify the Timiskaming Health Unit of their intention to open and can only open with written approval from the Acting Medical Officer of Health or from a public health inspector.

Masks should **not** be worn in the pool and water facilities.

Additional Resource: [Guide to Reopening Pools and Waterfronts \(Lifesaving Society\)](#)