

# COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR RECREATIONAL WATER FACILITIES (PUBLIC POOLS, SPRAY/SPLASH PADS, WHIRLPOOLS, AND WADING POOLS)

## RED CONTROL

February 3, 2021

### Introduction

This guidance document is for municipalities, hotels, resorts and persons who operate public recreational water facilities. It provides requirements and recommendations to help stop the spread of COVID-19 while operating pools, whirlpools, splash pads, spray pads, wading pools, and water slides.

All owners and operators of recreational water facilities have a responsibility to assess risks associated with their facility and operations and ensure that they mitigate these risks for their employees, volunteers, and attendees. Specific to COVID-19, owners and operators are responsible for implementing measures to reduce the risk of infection among all those who attend their facilities.

The Lifesaving Society has published the [Guide to Reopening Pools and Waterfronts](#) and local municipalities may also implement local public health directions, bylaws, and policies that can exceed the provincial laws and recommendations. Please continue to check the Lifesaving Society website and local health units frequently.

### Status – Red Level

#### Open

Swimming pools, splash pads, spray pads, wading pools, whirlpools, and water slides may open.

#### Closed

Saunas, steam rooms, waterparks, oxygen bars, bath houses, sensory deprivation pods – unless they are used for a therapeutic purpose prescribed by, or administered by, a regulated health professional.

## Key Recommendations

### Limit Gathering Sizes and Physical Distancing

- Allowable gathering size must adhere to the government of Ontario's limits for recreational facilities, ensuring physical distancing of 2 m (6 ft.) is maintained for those outside of the same household.
- Swimming lessons may operate with 2 m physical distancing (where possible) and a maximum of 10 students in (indoors) and 25 (outdoors) in each instructional space.
- During fitness classes (i.e., aqua-fit) physical distancing must be increased to 3 m (10 ft.) and a people maximum of 10 people are permitted in the fitness classes.
- Recreational swimming is permitted, and it is recommended that the overall bather load for pools be reduced to ensure physical distancing can be maintained.
- Viewing areas should be either closed or their capacity reduced to allow for proper physical distancing.
- Reservations/appointments required for entry; one reservation required for teams.
- No spectators permitted (exemption for one parent/guardian supervision of children under 18).
- Limit of 90 minutes duration of stay unless engaged in a sport or during staff training and certification courses.
- Locker room, change room or showers may be open only if used in conjunction with a pool, splash pad, spray pad, whirlpool, wading pool or water slide.

## Safety Plan

- A safety plan must be developed and implemented. It is designed to reduce risk of COVID-19 transmission within the facility.
- The safety plan must be in writing and available on request. A copy of the safety plan must be posted in a conspicuous location where it can be viewed by staff and patrons.
- A safety plan template is available at:  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/develop-your-covid-19-workplace-safety-plan>

## Admission Screening

- All individuals who enter the facility must have their contact information recorded (including a first name and telephone number/e-mail address) and be screened for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Screening can be completed by telephone, app, questionnaire, interview, etc. Staff should reinforce basic safety protocols: distancing, masking, handwashing, etc.
- Maintain log records for one month and only disclose records to a medical officer of health or a public health inspector.
- It is critical that all staff self-screen for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 before beginning their shift. Staff are to stay home when they are sick.
- A face covering or mask is required to be worn when exiting the swimming pool and entering into a public indoor space, such as the public areas of washrooms, and change rooms.
- The volume of music must be limited to conversation level to avoid shouting by both instructors and members of the public.

## Physical Distancing

- The operator of a pool, splash/spray pad, whirlpool, water slides, or wading pool may consider a range of other supportive options that aids in meeting the physical distancing requirements depending on the operating status of their facility including:
  - Have an attendant (separate from an on-duty lifeguard) monitor the number of bathers permitted in the pool/whirlpool and the maintenance of 2 m physical distancing during all recreational swimming and 3 m during aqua fitness lessons.
  - Encourage pool deck shower usage.
  - Post signage related to physical distancing.
  - Change room capacity may need to be adjusted to allow for physical distancing.
- There is no legislation in Ontario that requires lifeguards to maintain physical distancing while performing their lifeguard duties or while training. Lifeguards should ensure physical distancing precautions are followed to the best extent possible.

## Face Coverings and Masks

- Face coverings are not required while using indoor public pools, whirlpools, water slides, spray/splash pads, or wading pools. Masks/face covering may be removed when entering the water. Masks should be reapplied once bathers exit the water and worn on the pool deck and in the change rooms.
- Eyewear and masks/face coverings should be worn by lifeguards when on the deck and actively monitoring the pool.

## Operations

- According to the U.S. Centre for Disease Control, proper operation and maintenance of pools, hot tubs, whirlpools and water play areas will prevent waterborne transmission of the virus responsible for COVID-19, specifically disinfection with chlorine and bromine will inactivate the virus. Pool operators who are subject to the requirements of Ontario Regulation 565 made under the HPPA are required to maintain proper operation and maintenance of the pool, including water quality requirements in accordance with the regulation.
- Factors that may increase the risk of transmission include inadequate levels of disinfectant, malfunctioning equipment, overcrowding, person to person transmission (through contact with droplets), and large organic loading (e.g., feces or vomit).
- Any equipment that is provided for the use to the public must be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.
- Any washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms, showers, or similar amenities made available to the public are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.

## Signage

- Post signs promoting wearing face coverings, handwashing, physical distancing, and make them visible to staff and customers.

Lifesaving Society Ontario  
400 Consumers Rd., Toronto, Ontario, M2J 1P8  
Tel: 416-490-8844 Fax: 416-490-8766  
Email: [experts@lifeguarding.com](mailto:experts@lifeguarding.com)  
[lifesavingsociety.com](http://lifesavingsociety.com)