



LIFESAVING SOCIETY®
The Lifeguarding Experts

Lifesaving Society Guidance for Aquatic Facilities: Updated public health measures in response to the Omicron Variant of Covid-19

Updated January 04, 2022

In response to recent trends that show a rapid increase in hospitalizations due to the Omicron Variant of Covid-19, the Province of Ontario [has announced](#) that it will move to a [Modified Step 2](#) of its Roadmap to Reopen.

As of January 05, 2022, at 12:01 am, additional public health measures are in effect for at least 21 days (through January 26, 2022).

The plan continues to be guided by the ongoing assessment of key public health and health care indicators and supported by local or regional measures. Public health and workplace safety measures continue to apply across all steps, including screening, physical distancing and capacity limits, mask wearing and personal protective equipment, and cleaning, disinfection and ventilation best practices.

The Roadmap to Reopen follows the existing regulations under the Reopening Ontario Act:

- Ontario [Regulation 82/20](#) applies to Step 1
- Ontario [Regulation 263/20](#) applies to Step 2
- Ontario [Regulation 364/20](#) applies to Step 3
- Emergency Order Amendments are first posted here:
www.ontario.ca/page/emergency-information

The steps of the Roadmap to Reopen for aquatic facilities, which will be applied provincially, are as follows: *(Note: more information and regulatory updates are expected.)*

Modified Step 2 – January 05, 2022

CLOSED

- Indoor aquatic facilities, including swimming pools, whirlpools, wading pools, waterslides, splash/spray pads.
- Indoor waterparks and amusement parks.
- Saunas and steam rooms.
- Indoor swimming lessons.

- Indoor aqua fitness classes.
- Day camps and overnight camps for children.
- Indoor food and drink establishments, except for takeout & delivery.
- Indoor recreational amenities, gyms and facilities for sports and recreational fitness.

OPEN

- Outdoor aquatic facilities (e.g., swimming pools & whirlpools), outdoor swimming lessons and aqua fitness classes, in accordance with [Ontario Regulation 565](#) and with restrictions.
- Indoor training for Olympic/Paralympic athletes and identified professional/elite amateur athletes.
- Indoor lifeguard training & certifications: indoor health and safety training is permitted at 50% capacity.
- Indoor swimming and physical therapy for persons with disabilities, with specific conditions.
- Indoor community centres and multi-purpose facilities – open at 50% capacity with limited exceptions.
- Accessing facilities to perform maintenance and/or to prepare the business or place to be reopened.

Modified Step 3 – Approximately January 27, 2022

OPEN

- Indoor pools, splash pads, spray pads, whirlpools, wading pools and waterslides open in accordance with [Ontario Regulation 565](#) and at 50% capacity.
- Outdoor aquatic facilities open with restrictions.
- Indoor and outdoor waterparks and amusement parks open with capacity restrictions.
- Community centres and multi-purpose facilities open with restrictions.
- Indoor and outdoor aqua fitness classes open with restrictions.
- Swimming lessons, indoor and outdoor locations: In-person teaching and instruction, at least 2 metres from every other person in the instructional space, except where necessary for teaching and instruction that cannot be effectively provided if physical distancing is maintained.
- Lifeguard training and certifications: health and safety training with capacity limits.
- Spectators permitted with restrictions.
- Indoor and outdoor food and drink establishments may operate with restrictions.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 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.
- Please note that based on local trends, public health units have issued local orders and instructions. Operators should review local guidance when updating their reopening and workplace safety plans and follow provincial regulations and local requirements.
- The Lifesaving Society has published the [Guide to Reopening Pools and Waterfronts](#) and [other guidance documents](#). Please continue to check the Lifesaving Society website and local health units frequently for updates.

PROOF OF VACCINATION

The Province of Ontario has updated its [guidance](#) and [FAQs](#) for [businesses and organizations](#) implementing proof of vaccination requirements. Operators should review these requirements and understand their responsibilities. Recent changes include:

- [Proof of vaccination](#) requirements for youth aged 12 to 17 years of age participating in organized sports at recreational facilities, including swimming lessons, aquatic sports, and certification programs.
- Mandatory use of the enhanced vaccine certificate with QR code and the [Verify Ontario App](#) in settings where proof of vaccination is required effective January 04, 2022.
- Only medical exemptions entered into the enhanced vaccine certificate QR code will be accepted effective January 10, 2022.

Requirement to be fully vaccinated

Patrons and spectators who are 12 years of age and older, and are eligible to be vaccinated, must be fully vaccinated in order to access identified settings. The province defines "[fully vaccinated](#)," which typically means the person received their final dose of the Covid-19 vaccine at least 14 days prior.

Exemptions based on age

The province provides certain exceptions to proof of vaccination requirements based on age including:

- Children under the age of 5 years are not yet eligible to be vaccinated and thus are not required to be.

- Children 5–11 years of age are eligible to be vaccinated as of November 2021. Proof of vaccination does not yet apply to this age group.
- Individuals born in 2010 and who turn 12 in 2022 have 12 weeks in order to become fully vaccinated, in accordance with [provincial regulations](#).

Other exemptions

The province provides certain exceptions to proof of vaccination requirements, including those for:

- Individuals who cannot be vaccinated due to a [medical reason](#).
- Employees or volunteers, such as coaches and officials.
- Certain essential services, such as day camp, child care, social services, court services, government services.

Municipalities, local public health units, and organizations have implemented more stringent requirements, often closing exemptions or including requirements for rapid antigen testing.

- For example, Toronto Public Health has issued a [Letter of Instruction](#) requiring proof of vaccination for all persons age 12 and older participating or coaching in indoor organized sports.

Operators should consult their local public health unit, municipality or facility policies for further guidance.

Organizational vaccination policies

On the recommendations of public health authorities, the Lifesaving Society Ontario has implemented a [Covid-19 vaccination and testing policy](#) for its staff, trainers and volunteers.

The Lifesaving Society encourages operators and affiliates to develop their own organizational policies in consultation with their local public health unit. Where appropriate, organizations should require proof of vaccination and/or testing for lifeguards, instructors and participants in Lifesaving Society programs.

What can I show as proof of vaccination?

Clients are required to present, at point of entry, an enhanced vaccine certificate with QR code and personal identification containing their name and date of birth. For most activities, this is done each time they visit the facility.

Ontarians can download their enhanced vaccine certificate containing QR code from the [provincial website](#). The enhanced vaccine certificate follows the [Canadian Covid-19 proof of vaccination](#) standard. Ontarians can also contact the Provincial Vaccine Contact Centre at 1-833-943-3900 for assistance.

As of January 04, 2022, operators are required to use the [Verify Ontario App](#) to check clients' eligibility to enter based on their Covid-19 vaccination status. The app, operating on Apple or Android devices, verifies QR codes from Ontario's enhanced vaccine certificate and the certificates of all Canadian jurisdictions.

Individuals who received their vaccinations outside of Ontario are encouraged to register them with their local public health unit. Visitors to Ontario can provide proof of full vaccination from another jurisdiction as well as appropriate personal identification in order to access facilities where proof of vaccination is required.

SAFETY MEASURES FOR AQUATIC FACILITIES

What are the requirements for safety plans for aquatic facilities?

Operators must prepare, update, and make available a [Covid-19 safety plan](#). A copy of the plan must be made available to any person for review upon request, and be posted where it would come to the attention of individuals working in or attending the business.

The safety plan must describe the measures and procedures businesses have implemented or will implement to reduce the transmission risk of Covid-19. This includes, but is not limited to:

- screening
- physical distancing
- masks or face coverings
- cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects
- wearing of personal protective equipment
- preventing and controlling crowding

Operators of aquatic sports leagues and competitions must have a safety plan. National and provincial sport organizations provide helpful guidance outlining best practices for these activities.

What capacity limits and distancing requirements apply to aquatic facilities?

- Capacity limits apply to indoor and outdoor aquatic facilities in accordance with regulations for Step 2 and Step 3 (e.g., 2 m distancing, 50% capacity, as applicable).
- The operator must post a sign in a conspicuous location visible to the public that states the capacity limits under which the facility is permitted to operate.
- It is also required to further limit capacity in an instructional class so that participants can maintain a 2 m physical distance from each other. Physical distancing is required, except where necessary for teaching and instruction that cannot be effectively provided if physical distancing is maintained.
- In the absence of regulatory capacity limits or distancing requirements, operators must follow local public health advice and the measures outlined in their safety plan.

What are the rules on mask wearing?

- Mask wearing for patrons and employees is required in indoor areas including spectator areas, and in outdoor areas when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Masks should be removed when “entering the water,” e.g., when entering the pool or shower.
- Masks may be removed when actively engaging in an athletic or fitness activity.
- Masks must be worn in the facility, on the pool deck, and in the changerooms.
- Masks should be worn in queues (line-up) or waiting areas.
- Spectators must wear masks at all times.

What are the rules on personal protective equipment (PPE) for employees?

- Masks must be worn in indoor public areas and when breaking 2 m physical distancing if not separated by a physical barrier.
- Masks and protective eyewear must be worn when breaking 2 m physical distancing with an individual who is not masked or is improperly masked.
- The Lifesaving Society recommends personal protective equipment for lifeguards and staff who perform first aid as recommended by [Public Health Ontario](#), including wearing a mask or respirator, protective eyewear, gloves and isolation gown as appropriate.
- Review your workplace guidelines or local public health unit guidance to determine which PPE to select and for what use.

What screening and contact tracing requirements are in effect?

- Operators are required to verify – at point of entry – proof of vaccination and personal identification of participants and spectators, as required by provincial regulation or local requirements.
- All businesses and organizations are required to [actively screen employees](#) for Covid-19 before they go to work or start their shift each day, whether or not they have been vaccinated.
- The person responsible for the facility must record the name and contact information of every person who enters the facility and [actively screen individuals](#) who enter the facility for Covid-19, whether or not they have been vaccinated.
- Screening/contact tracing may be conducted by way of interview, questionnaire, app, phone call, etc.
- As of [December 31, 2021](#), the Province has [updated its guidance](#) related to exposure, isolation and testing. Individuals should also review requirements issued by their local public health unit.

What are the requirements for cleaning and disinfection?

- Operators must follow the requirements of [Ontario Regulation 565](#) in regards to safe water management, and the cleaning and disinfection of the pool deck and facility.
- Operators must ensure that equipment, washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms, showers and similar amenities that are accessible to the public are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition. Often, this means cleaning and disinfecting equipment between individuals and cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces at least twice per day.
- Operators should ensure that shower facilities, including warm water and soap, are available to bathers, as regulation requires that bathers shower prior to entering the pool deck.
- Operators should ensure hand washing / hand sanitizing stations are readily available within their facilities, for both employees and patrons. Signage should be installed promoting proper hand hygiene practices.

What is the guidance on indoor ventilation?

- The virus causing Covid-19 is known to spread through droplets and aerosols, which represent a risk particularly to people who are in enclosed spaces and indoor situations where people are in close proximity. Adequate ventilation can contribute to reducing the risk of Covid-19 transmission in indoor settings.
- Operators should review guidance on [indoor ventilation](#) and consult a heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) professional to determine if their ventilation system is operating optimally. Good ventilation includes avoiding recirculating air, increasing indoor/outdoor air exchange, air filtration and opening windows/doors where possible.
- Many of the measures in place to ensure good air quality in swimming pool environments are also effective in reducing the risk of Covid-19 transmission.

What about training for staff?

- Staff should be adequately trained on all measures to keep themselves and the public safe. Operational and emergency procedures should be practiced frequently as part of pre-season and in-service training.
- Operators should ensure that as procedures are updated, this information is effectively communicated to staff and patrons
- The Society provides guidance for operators regarding in-person and virtual training on its [Covid-19 resources](#) page.

The Lifesaving Society provides these guidelines for aquatic operators based on its review of provincial requirements and best practices. Local municipalities and public health units may implement more stringent requirements. Operators are encouraged to consult their local public health unit or municipality and/or consult independent legal advice, as appropriate.

Please continue to check the Lifesaving Society website frequently for updates.

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