



LIFESAVING SOCIETY®

The Lifeguarding Experts

Lifesaving Society Guidance for Aquatic Facilities: Covid-19 and Respiratory Viruses

Updated November 18, 2022

The Lifesaving Society continues to support the recommendations of public health authorities related to the [prevention of Covid-19](#) and other respiratory viruses.

Public health authorities strongly recommend the following actions:

- Staying up to date with your vaccinations, including [Covid-19 booster doses](#) and [influenza vaccines](#) when eligible.
- [Wearing a high-quality and well-fitting mask](#) in all indoor public settings, especially when around people who are at higher risk (such as children under 5, seniors, or those who have a health condition).
- Screening for symptoms and staying home and masking when sick.
- Seeking [testing and medical treatment](#) as appropriate.
- Reinforcing hygiene practices including [respiratory etiquette](#), [hand washing](#), surface disinfection and indoor ventilation.
- Practicing physical distancing where possible and limiting close contact with individuals who may be at higher risk.

In line with the latest public health recommendations from Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH), the Lifesaving Society strongly encourages all lifeguards and instructors to wear a mask in indoor areas of aquatic facilities, except when entering the water or where physical distancing can be maintained at all times (such as in a lifeguard chair). Aquatic facilities cater to several individuals at higher risk during this respiratory virus season, including children under 5, seniors, and persons with health conditions.

The Society also encourages all eligible lifeguards and instructors to remain up to date with their vaccinations and to follow all public health guidelines, including practicing respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, surface disinfection, and staying home when sick.

Operators should support the recommendations of the CMOH by providing masks and hand sanitizer to workers and to members of the public and by supporting staff to stay home when they are sick. Where appropriate, operators may implement their own masking and sanitary requirements.

Operators should continue to monitor federal, provincial and local guidance as they update their operating plans and procedures.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Owners and operators of recreational water facilities have a responsibility to assess risks associated with their facility and its operations, and take the necessary steps to mitigate these risks for their workers, employees, volunteers, and patrons. Specific to Covid-19 and respiratory viruses, owners and operators are responsible for implementing measures to reduce the risk of infection among all those who attend their facilities.
- Based on local trends, public health units may issue local orders and recommendations. Operators should review local guidance when updating their operating plans in order to ensure compliance.
- 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.

SAFETY MEASURES FOR AQUATIC FACILITIES

What are the requirements for safety plans for aquatic facilities?

- Businesses in Ontario are no longer required by regulation to prepare, update, and make available a [Covid-19 safety plan](#).

What capacity limits and distancing requirements apply to aquatic facilities?

- There is no requirement for physical distancing in public swimming pools or during swimming lessons.
- There are no capacity limits in effect related to Covid-19. Operators must follow existing regulations, such as bather load under [Ontario Regulation 565](#), and building occupant load requirements as appropriate.

What are the rules on mask wearing?

- Mandatory masking requirements have been relaxed in most indoor settings. However, Ontario's chief medical officer of health and Canada's chief public health officer strongly recommend that all individuals wear masks in indoor public places and workplaces to reduce the spread of respiratory viruses.
- Masking is required in public places when recovering from a Covid-19 diagnosis, respiratory virus symptoms, or following an exposure.

- For individuals with respiratory virus symptoms who are staying home, masking around people who are at higher risk (such as children under 5, seniors, or those who have a health condition) is also recommended.
- Local jurisdictions as well as businesses & organizations may implement their own mandatory masking requirements for patrons and workers.

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

- Employers need to follow direction from the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) in regards to [mask wearing](#) and workplace safety requirements.
- The Lifesaving Society recommends personal protective equipment (PPE) for lifeguards and staff who perform first aid as recommended by [Public Health Ontario](#), including wearing a mask or respirator, protective eyewear, gloves and an isolation gown as appropriate.
- Operators are encouraged to review the Lifesaving Society Canada Information Bulletin on [Covid-19 Resuscitation & First Aid Recommendations](#).

What mandatory vaccination or testing rules are in effect?

- Provincial [proof of vaccination](#) requirements are no longer in effect.
- Certain facilities/organizations have mandatory vaccination policies and/or testing requirements. Operators should review with their local facility/organization, to see what requirements are applicable to their situation.
 - For example, the Lifesaving Society Ontario's [Covid-19 vaccination and testing policy](#) for staff, trainers and volunteers remains in effect.

What screening and contact tracing requirements are in effect?

- The requirement to [screen workers](#) and patrons for Covid-19 and retain names/contact information for the purpose of contact tracing has been relaxed.
- Workers and patrons should be encouraged to screen themselves and follow provincial isolation and testing requirements, including to stay home if they are sick, and to mask following their isolation period or when self-monitoring.
- Operators may maintain a screening questionnaire or signage as they deem appropriate.

What isolation and testing requirements are in effect?

- The Province of Ontario [provides guidance](#) around isolation due to symptoms or exposure to Covid-19 and respiratory viruses. Workers and patrons should follow provincial and local public health guidance.

- Clinical assessment and testing guidance [recommend testing and medical treatment](#) for certain individuals.
- Organizations can access [free rapid tests](#) for members of their workplace or organization.
- Individuals can access free [rapid testing for at-home use](#) at grocery and pharmacy locations in their community.

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.
- 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 workers and patrons. Signage should be installed promoting proper hand hygiene practices.

What is the guidance on indoor ventilation?

- The virus causing Covid-19, and other respiratory viruses, are [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 and respiratory virus 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.

Lifesaving Society Ontario
400 Consumers Rd., Toronto, Ontario, M2J 1P8
Tel: 416-490-8844 Fax: 416-490-8766
Email: experts@lifeguarding.com
lifesavingsociety.com