

Phase Two Guidance Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Guidance for Gyms and Workout Studios

During Phase Two, the public and businesses will be required to adopt new behaviors and rigorous safeguards to reduce risk for all. In Phase Two, fitness facilities may reopen with limited access (5 people per 1,000 square feet), strong safeguards and physical distancing. **The following measures should be implemented to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission amongst employees, clients, and the community.** For additional information, visit <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo>.

This guidance applies to fitness facilities such as gyms, health clubs, yoga studios, dance and workout studios, indoor racquet and squash courts, rock climbing centers, and skating rinks.

The following remain **closed** during phase 2:

- Formal or informal games for high contact sports (e.g., football, wrestling, mixed martial arts).
- Showers, saunas, and steam rooms.
- Locker rooms (except in cases where locker room entry is the only access to the toilets/restrooms). There should be no showering or changing of clothing in facilities.
- “Hot yoga” classes.

Please note that any individual experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, or recently exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19, should not work in, or visit the gym or workout studio due to the risk of exposing others. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include: fever (subjective or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, or otherwise feeling unwell.

Employees and Patrons Should Practice Everyday Prevention Measures

- **Stay at home if you are sick** or were recently exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Practice social distancing. Keep 6 feet of distance between you and other people who are not in your household.
- Don't shake hands, give high-fives, do elbow bumps, or touch others at the facility.
- Outdoor activities are preferred over indoor; however it is important to understand that **interacting with more people in any setting raises your risk**, so it is important to follow social distancing and cloth face covering recommendations.
- Employees and clients must wear a cloth face covering when in the facility.
 - All individuals in the facility must wear face covering when entering, exiting, or walking around the facility and when within 6 feet of other people.
 - When exercising, clients and instructors/trainers are encouraged to wear a face covering if able to do so safely. If this is not possible, individuals should increase the distance (minimum of 6 ft.) between themselves and others.
- Perform frequent hand hygiene (with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water not available).
 - Key times to perform hand hygiene include
 - Before eating food,
 - After using the toilet,
 - Before and after putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings,
 - Before and after work shifts and work breaks,
 - Before and after using any equipment,

- Before and after participating in fitness or workout activities,
 - After handling client belongings, and
 - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- For further information for the public regarding use of fitness facilities, see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/activities.html>

Employer Considerations to Encourage Employee and Patron Safety

- Evaluate the space and capacity of the facility to ensure clients can properly socially distance themselves at all times while in the facility, including areas that may be prone to congregation, such as equipment rooms, gym floors, entrances, exits, and other amenities.
- Implement options for online reservations and check-in systems.
- Schedule appropriately sized group classes to allow staff to adequately clean between class sessions and to minimize congregating of individuals as they leave and enter the class.
- Provide supplies to allow for frequent hand hygiene (soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available) in client areas (e.g., check-in/check-out spaces, workout areas).
- Provide staff with appropriate personal protective equipment based on their work tasks (e.g., masks, gloves) and cloth face coverings.
- Consider creating sanitization stations in multiple areas of the facility that is stocked with hand sanitizers and disinfecting supplies for easy access by clients and employees.
- Facilities with day care, personal care services, spas, and food service facilities, should follow guidance appropriate to those specific areas. Refer to <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance> for more information.
- Implement leave policies that are flexible and non-punitive and allow sick employees to stay home.
 - Leave policies should also account for employees who need to stay home with their children if there are school or childcare closures, or to care for sick family members.
- Stagger employee start time and break times as much as possible.
- Educate employees about COVID-19. Refer to <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/> for more information.

Avoid Close Contact and Reduce Touchpoints

- Arrange workstations, common areas, break rooms, and other areas of the business to ensure at least 6 feet between patrons and/or employees.
- **Workout areas, including those with cardio and strength equipment, should ensure at least 10 feet in all directions between patrons.**
- Install transparent shields or other physical barriers where social distancing is not an option such as between front desk staff and patrons checking in.
- Utilize outdoor space or options for virtual classes and training sessions as much as possible.
- Limit group class attendance such that there is at least **10 feet** between each person, stationary apparatus, or other piece of equipment in all directions.
- Use visual cues to help prevent congregating in waiting areas or checkout areas. Remove chairs from waiting areas to ensure people do not sit close together or wait in groups. Restrict access to areas where social distancing cannot be followed.
- Require different entry and exit points to the facility, where possible.
- Encourage clients to use one piece of equipment at a time (i.e., no circuits or “super setting”) so that machines can be cleaned by staff after each use.

- Discourage the use of equipment requiring more than one person to operate, unless those operating are from the same household (e.g., free weights when it requires a spotter).
- Do not allow use of facility equipment that cannot be cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected between use, such as resistance bands, climbing rope, and weightlifting belts.
- Encourage clients to bring their own towels, exercise mats, and water bottles.
- Move retail inventory to “no-touch” areas (i.e., behind a counter).
- Limit or eliminate vending machines or other high-touch stations.
- Implement touchless payment (e.g. digital platforms) and check-in methods, as much as possible. The use of fingerprint ID/scanners is discouraged.
- Remove high-touch items that are not able to be cleaned or disinfected from the service areas of the business (e.g., magazines, newspapers).

Pools

- Gym pools are allowed to reopen with social distancing policies in place while people are swimming and on the pool deck area.
- The building should be prepared for emergency pool closure order or other restrictions that may need to be enforced by DC Health.
- Protocols must be in place to ensure that cleaning and disinfecting of the deck areas frequently.
- Prominently post at the pool area the name and contact information of the person responsible for ensuring safety provisions.
- A written plan must be available to address implementation of guidance as provided by DC government.

Screening and Monitoring for Symptoms

- Place a sign at the business entrance to inform staff and clients of screening procedure.
- Perform screening (e.g., symptom questionnaires) of employees daily, prior to entering the business, over the phone or in person.
- Employees who report symptoms or testing positive for COVID-19 should not enter the business.
- If an employee or patron develops any symptoms of COVID-19 while in the building, there should be a plan in place for that individual to immediately isolate, notify someone, and leave the building.
- Maintain a daily record of individuals who have visited the business for at least 30 days.

Clean and Disinfect

- Business should have a comprehensive plan for cleaning and disinfecting high traffic and high-touch surface areas (e.g., exercise equipment, counters, payment kiosks, restrooms, etc.) routinely throughout the day, and in between client use.
- Cleaning and EPA-approved disinfectants should be available for clients to use immediately before and after using equipment.
- Employers must have a protocol in place to ensure that cleaning and disinfecting of shared equipment occurs after each use.
- Scheduling should allow for adequate time to clean and disinfect between clients.
- For more information about cleaning and disinfecting for businesses and disinfectants that are effective against the virus that causes COVID-19, see the see the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>
- DC Health (or DCRA if appropriate) will conduct unannounced inspections of the facilities/studios to determine compliance with the cleaning and sanitation criteria/standards that are outlined in this guidance.

Building Considerations

- Consider increasing circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows or exterior doors if possible. If available and owner has access, open fresh air handlers.
- If the building was closed for an extended period of time, remember to check HVAC systems and ensure all water systems are safe to use. For more information, see CDC's Guidance for Reopening Buildings after Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html>.

Establish a Plan for COVID-19 Exposure

- Establish a plan in the event that an employee or patron is diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Identify a point of contact at the establishment that an employee or patron can notify if they test positive for COVID-19 and choose to disclose this information.
- If an employee chooses to report to the establishment that they are positive for COVID-19, the establishment should have a notification process to share the following with staff:
 - Education about COVID-19, including the signs and symptoms of COVID-19
 - Referral to the Guidance for Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19, available at <https://coronavirus.dc.gov>
 - Information on options for COVID-19 testing in the District of Columbia, available at <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/testing>
- If an employee notifies the establishment they tested positive for COVID-19 **AND** the employee had extensive contact with clients/visitors **OR** if a patron notifies the establishment they tested positive for COVID-19, then the establishment should notify DC Health by emailing coronavirus@dc.gov with the following information:
 - "COVID-19 Consult" in the email subject line
 - Name and direct phone number of the best point of contact at the establishment for DC Health to return the call
 - Estimated number of patrons/visitors potentially exposed
 - Short summary of incident/situation
- An investigator from DC Health will follow-up within 24 hours to all appropriately submitted email notifications.
- Maintain check-in logs and class rosters with times of entry for at least three weeks, to facilitate contact tracing in the event a patron or employee contracts COVID-19.

The guidelines above will continue to be updated as the outbreak evolves. Please visit <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/> regularly for the most current information.