

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 must be implemented to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission amongst employees, clients, and the community.** For additional information, visit coronavirus.dc.gov.

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 Two:

- Formal or informal games for medium-to-high contact sports (e.g., basketball, football).
- Communal pools except for lane swimming and classes.
- Showers, saunas, and steam rooms.
- Locker rooms (except in cases where locker room entry is the only access to the toilets/restrooms). Showering and changing of clothes in facilities is prohibited.
- “Hot yoga” classes.

Please note that any individual experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, or recently exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19, must 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 Must Practice Everyday Prevention Measures

- **Stay at home if you feel unwell** 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.
- **Wear a cloth face covering** when in the facility.
 - All individuals **must** wear a face covering while entering, exiting or within the facility, including while exercising if able to do so safely.
- 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.
- 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 cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/activities.html

Employer Considerations to Encourage Employee and Patron Safety

- Employers must 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.
- Employers must provide supplies to allow for frequent hand hygiene (soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol) in client areas (e.g., check-in/check-out spaces, workout areas).
- Employers must 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 the public and employees.
- Facilities with day care, personal care services, spas, and food service facilities, must follow guidance appropriate to those specific areas. Refer to coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance for more information.
- Implement leave policies that are flexible and non-punitive, and that allow sick employees to stay home. Leave policies are recommended to account for the following
 - Employees who report COVID-19 symptoms,
 - Employees who were tested for COVID-19 and test results are pending,
 - Employees who tested positive for COVID-19,
 - Employees who are a close contact of someone who tested positive for COVID-19,
 - Employees who need to stay home with their children if there are school or childcare closures, or to care for sick family member.
- Keep abreast of current law, which has amended both the DC Family and Medical Leave Act and the DC Sick and Safe Leave Law and created whole new categories of leave, like Declared Emergency Leave.
- Learn about and inform your employees about COVID-related leave provided through new federal law, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and all applicable District law relating to sick leave.
- Stagger employee start time and break times.
- Employers must educate employees about COVID-19. Refer to coronavirus.dc.gov for more information.

Avoid Close Contact and Reduce Touchpoints

- Workstations, common areas, break rooms, and other areas of the business must be arranged to ensure at least 6 feet between patrons and/or employees.
- **Workout areas, including those with cardio and strength equipment, must ensure at least 10 feet in all directions between patrons.**
- Transparent shields or other physical barriers must be installed 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.
- Group class attendance must be limited 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. Facilities must restrict access to areas where social distancing cannot be followed.

- Require different entry and exit points to the facility, where possible.
- Require 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.
- Prohibit 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).
- Remove facility equipment that cannot be cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected between use, such as resistance bands, climbing rope, and weightlifting belts.
- Require clients to bring their own towels, exercise mats, and water bottles.
- Retail inventory must be moved 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. Use of fingerprint ID/scanners is prohibited.
- High-touch items that are not able to be cleaned or disinfected from the service areas of the business (e.g., magazines, newspapers) must be removed.

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 must be prepared for emergency pool closure orders or other restrictions that may need to be enforced by DC Health
- Protocols must be in place to ensure that deck areas are frequently cleaned and disinfected.
- The name and contact information of the person responsible for ensuring safety provisions must be prominently posted at the pool area.
- A written plan must be available to address implementation of guidance as provided by DC government.
- Masks should not be worn while in the pool.

Screening and Monitoring for Symptoms

- Business must perform screening (e.g., symptom questionnaires) of employees daily, prior to entering the business, over the phone or in person.
 - For **Screening Tool Guidance**, visit coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance
- Facilities must place signage at the business entrance to inform staff and clients of screening procedures.
- Employees who report symptoms or testing positive for COVID-19 must not enter the business.
- If an employee or patron develops any symptoms of COVID-19 while in the building, there must be a plan in place for that individual to immediately isolate, notify their supervisor, and leave the building.
- Business must maintain a daily record of individuals who have visited the business for at least 30 days to assist with contact tracing.

Clean and Disinfect

- Business must 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 must 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 must 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 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website: [epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19](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

- Increase 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: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html](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 must 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 [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov)
 - Information on options for COVID-19 testing in the District of Columbia, available at [coronavirus.dc.gov/testing](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov/testing)
- Establishments must notify DC Health when:
 - An employee notifies the establishment they **tested positive for COVID-19** (not before results come back)
 - AND**
 - the employee interacts frequently with patrons
 - OR**
 - if a patron notifies the establishment they tested positive for COVID-19.
- Notify DC Health by submitting an online form on the DC Health COVID-19 Reporting Requirements website dchealth.dc.gov/page/covid-19-reporting-requirements:
 - Submit a **Non-Healthcare Facility COVID-19 Consult Form**.
- An investigator from DC Health will follow-up within 24 hours to all appropriately submitted notifications.

The guidelines above will continue to be updated as the outbreak evolves. Please visit [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov) regularly for the most current information.