

Phase Two Guidance Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Guidance for Gyms and Fitness Activities

This guidance is intended for gyms and fitness facilities during Phase Two and has been updated in accordance with Mayor's Order 2020-119 issued on November 23, 2020. During Phase Two, businesses are required to adopt new behaviors and rigorous safeguards to reduce risk for all. **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, recreation centers, health clubs, yoga studios, dance and workout studios, indoor racquet and squash courts, rock climbing centers, and skating rinks. This guidance also applies to private personal trainers.

General Information

- Fitness facilities may continue to operate with limited access (5 people per 1,000 square feet including staff and patrons), with strong safeguards to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, such as physical distancing and cloth face coverings, in place.
- Outdoor group exercise may be conducted in a facility with a ceiling or overhead covering, provided the structure has only two or fewer walls or flaps. Fully enclosed tents are not "outdoors" for purposes of this rule, nor does the opening of one retractable garage-door style wall transform an indoor structure to outdoor.
- **Starting November 25, 2020, the following are no longer permitted:**
 - **Indoor group exercise classes, and**
 - **Outdoor group exercise classes of 25 or more persons**

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;
- 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 10 feet of distance while engaging in physical activity.**
- **Wear a cloth face covering** when in the facility. Masks protect the wearer and protect other people.
 - All individuals **must** wear a face covering while entering, exiting, or within the facility, including while exercising if able to do so safely.
- Outdoor activities are preferred over indoor; however, interacting with more people in any setting raises one's risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- Don't shake hands, give high-fives, do elbow bumps, or touch others at the facility.

- 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](https://www.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.
- 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 a 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

- Utilize virtual classes and training sessions as much as possible.
- Workstations, common areas, and break rooms must be arranged to ensure at least 6 feet between patrons and/or employees.

- **Workout areas (including outdoor group exercise classes) must ensure at least 10 feet in all directions between patrons and between patrons and staff.**
- **One-on-one personal training sessions may continue, with at least 10 feet in all directions between patrons and between patrons and staff.**
- An “Open Gym” concept is permitted at indoor fitness studios as long as the capacity limit is being adhered to and there is no group (larger than 1:1) instruction occurring.
- 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.
- 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.
- Prohibit outdoor group exercise class participants from congregating before and after classes.
- 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 for lane swimming only and 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

- Consider making the following improvements to improve building ventilation ([cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html)):
 - Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors.
 - Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms).
 - Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space.
 - Improve central air filtration to the highest level compatible with the filter rack, and seal edges of the filter to limit bypass.
 - Increase ventilation rates.
 - Check filters to ensure they are within service life and appropriately installed.
 - Keep systems running longer hours, 24/7 if possible, to enhance air exchanges in the building space.
 - Consult with a specialist to see what works for your building.
- If the building was closed for an extended period of time, 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 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
- Information on options for COVID-19 testing in the District of Columbia, available at coronavirus.dc.gov/testing
- Refer to the guidance “*First Steps for Non-Healthcare Employers when Employees Test Positive for COVID-19*” at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance.
- Establishments must notify DC Health when:
 - An employee who interacts frequently with patrons notifies the establishment they **tested positive for COVID-19** (not before results come back)
OR
 - if a patron notifies the establishment they tested positive for COVID-19.
AND
 - the person was in the building or participated in fitness activities **during their infectious period.**
 - The infectious period starts two days before symptom onset or date of test if asymptomatic, and typically ends 10 days after symptom onset/test date.
- 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 regularly for the most current information.