



COVID-19 Guidelines for Re-Opening of Recreational Water Facilities and Beaches in Windsor and Essex County

WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY
HEALTH UNIT

Environmental Health Department

June 2020



Table of Contents

COVID-19 GUIDELINES FOR RE-OPENING OF RECREATIONAL WATER FACILITIES IN WINDSOR-ESSEX	- 1 -
1.0 INTRODUCTION	- 3 -
Pool and Spa Online Learning Course	- 3 -
2.0 COVID-19 GENERAL INFORMATION.....	- 4 -
2.1 Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19.....	- 4 -
2.2 How COVID-19 Spreads	- 4 -
2.3 Staff Health.....	- 4 -
3.0 RECREATIONAL WATER FACILITIES (CLASS A, B, AND C) AND SPAS.....	- 6 -
3.1 Planning for Re-opening.....	- 6 -
3.2 Policies and Procedures.....	- 7 -
3.3 Reducing the Risk of Spread of COVID-19.....	- 8 -
4.0 PUBLIC BEACHES.....	- 11 -
4.1 Communication.....	- 11 -
4.2 Physical Distancing	- 11 -
4.3 Public Washrooms	- 12 -
4.4 Recreational and Safety Equipment.....	- 13 -
5.0 COMMUNICATION AND SIGNAGE.....	- 14 -
6.0 REFERENCES.....	- 15 -

1.0 Introduction

This document provides guidance for owners and operators of recreational water facilities to prepare them for re-opening and to operate their facility while minimizing the risk of COVID-19 transmission to employees and patrons.

As defined in [Ontario Regulation 565: Public Pools](#) (s. [2.0](#) and s. [2.1](#)), this document is relevant for the following types of recreational water facilities:

1. [Public Pools \(Class A and Class B\)](#)
2. [Public Spas](#)
3. [Class C facilities](#) , which includes:
 - a. Public wading pools
 - b. Public spray pads or public splash pads, and
 - c. Water slide receiving basins that serve solely as a receiving basin for persons at the bottom of a waterslide ([O. Reg. 141/18: Public Pools, s. 2](#))
4. Municipalities and agencies responsible for the operation of public beaches.

This document is not intended to be exhaustive and it is recommended that owners/operators of recreational water facilities **please speak with a Public Health Inspector for questions on re-opening of facilities by calling 519-258-2146 ext. 4475. Questions related to COVID-19 can be directed to a Public Health Nurse by calling 519-258-2146 ext. 4400.**

Please note that before opening or re-opening a recreational water facility **after a closure of 4 weeks or more, or after a renovation** you must notify the Health Unit and apply for an inspection at least 14 days BEFORE facility opening by [filling out this online form](#). Once the Health Unit receives your application, a Public Health Inspector will contact you to arrange for the inspection. **NOTE: This application does not apply to public beaches.**

Pool and Spa Online Learning Course

The online [Pool and Spa Operator course](#) remains available and free of charge on the WECHU e-learning website (www.learn.wechu.org) to teach owners/operators how to safely operate a public pool and spa to prevent water-related illness and injury to the public. The course will also cover [public health legislation](#) for public pools and spas, the role of a Public Health Inspector, and detailed information about pool maintenance (e.g. recirculation, filtration, disinfection, pool water chemistry and record keeping).

For detailed examples of policies, checklists, and procedures related to re-opening, please review the following documents from [The Lifesaving Society](#) and the [Ontario Recreation Facilities Association \(ORFA\)](#).

Information can change quickly. Please check the Ministry of Health Website at www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus and the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit (WECHU) at www.wechu.org/cv for updates and announcements.

2.0 COVID-19 General Information

2.1 Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19

People with confirmed COVID-19 have a [range of symptoms](#) from little to none to severe illness (e.g., pneumonia), and in some cases death. Symptoms may appear as early as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure. Common symptoms include:

- Fever (temperature of 37.8 °C or greater)
- New or worsening cough
- Shortness of breath

Other symptoms include:

- Sore throat
- Difficulty swallowing
- New olfactory or taste disorder(s)
- Nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain
- Runny nose, or nasal congestion in absence of underlying reason for these symptoms such as seasonal allergies, post nasal drip, etc.)

2.2 How COVID-19 Spreads

Person-to-person

COVID-19 spreads mainly from person-to-person, through close contact with others (less than 2 metres (6 feet)) and through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes; similar to how influenza is spread.

Spread from contact with contaminated surfaces or objects

The virus can also spread when someone touches objects or surfaces contaminated with the virus, and then touches their mouth, face, or eyes. The virus can remain on surfaces for a few hours up to several days depending on different conditions, such as temperature, type of surface and humidity of the environment.

2.3 Staff Health

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, it is important that staff report any respiratory illness to their employer and not report to work until receiving approval from their primary health care provider.

Staff should practice physical distancing at all times to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and should avoid close contact with other staff or users of their facility. Physical distancing is maintaining at least a 2 metres (6 feet) distance between themselves and others.

Staff should avoid touching guest's personal items such as towels, bags, payment cards or membership cards, and keys. If staff cannot avoid contact with a guest's personal items, they should wash their hands with warm water and soap, or with an alcohol-based hand rub immediately after contact.

3.0 Recreational Water Facilities (Class A, B, and C) and Spas

3.1 Planning for Re-opening

It is recommended that owners/operators create a plan for their re-opening process which includes notifying the Health Unit of their proposed opening date. This must be done by filling out an [“Application to Open or Re-Open Recreational Water Facilities”](#) online form on the Health Unit website. This notification must be submitted at least 14 days before opening a public pool, public spa, or Class C facility after construction, alteration, or after it has been closed for more than 4 weeks ([O. Reg 565 s. 5\(1\)](#))

Planning for re-opening should include consideration of the following:

- **Creating a reopening timeline for all amenities offered at your facility**
 - Determine the order in which programs will be offered in accordance with provincial orders. Examples of programs that may be affected include club swimming, day camps, lane swimming, open swimming, private lessons, and private parties.
- **Identifying the process for returning workers**
 - Which workers should return first and how many per shift?
 - How will workers will be [screened for symptoms](#) and how employees who become ill while at work be assisted?
 - What will be the flow of staff members while entering, working within, and exiting the premises?
 - What will be the PPE needs for employees (e.g. masks, gloves, face shields, resuscitation equipment).
- **Initiate a pre-startup operations process that includes**
 - Determining the [cleaning and disinfection](#) needs for the entire facility including mechanical systems cleaning and disinfecting.
 - Installation of transparent barriers at welcome desks and kiosks areas if possible. If this is not possible, ensure that non-medical face masks are provided for employees.
 - Inspection and maintenance of entire facility (e.g. HVAC systems, drinking water, washroom facilities)
 - Equipment and chemical checks and maintenance related to recreational water (e.g. water treatment and testing equipment, first aid, floats, etc.).
- **Establish a facility admission process**
 - [Signage to post at entrances](#) about [hand washing, cough and sneeze etiquette](#), physical distancing, symptoms, and [proper use of personal protective equipment](#). *See Section 5.0 for a list of examples for signage.*

- Ensure that measures are taken to promote physical distancing during busy times where line ups are probable. For example, floor markings or roped off areas for waiting.

3.2 Policies and Procedures

- **Staff Policies and Procedures should consider the following:**
 - Staff should not be sharing any equipment or personal items
 - Staff room/common areas should be cleaned before and after use and set up to ensure adequate physical distancing
 - Non-essential, shared items such as magazines, should be removed from common areas.
 - Employee PPE should be provided as needed and dependent on the type of work performed. Only staff who are required to come into close contact (less than 2 metres (6 feet)) with other should consider wearing a non-medical face mask.
 - First aid responder equipment should be designated per employee and not shared.
- **Facility Admission Policies should consider the following:**
 - Guests must be informed that they are not permitted to enter the facility if they have any symptoms of COVID-19.
 - Guests must be informed they are to maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from other guests and staff.
 - Guests must also be made aware of proper cough and sneeze etiquette and hand hygiene upon entry through the use of information (i.e. [posters](#)) displayed at the entrance.
 - Guests should be encouraged to use cashless/touch-free payment methods
 - Ensure that staff handling all transactions (cash/cards) practice frequent hand hygiene.
- **Policies and Procedures for General Public Swimming, Swimming Lessons, Day Camps and Groups**
 - Limit the number of people permitted at one time for public swimming, day camps or other groups to reduce crowding and encourage adequate physical distancing.
 - Ensure that swimming lessons are conducted in small groups to minimize close contact between students.
 - Require that all swimmers are pre-screened for any signs of illness before permitted to participate.
 - Create a [cleaning and disinfection](#) policy and procedure that includes frequency of cleaning, identifying high-touch surfaces (e.g. doors, switches, drinking

fountains, washrooms, drinking fountains), and [the type of disinfectant](#) to be used.

- Please review the [COVID-19 Guidance: Summer Day Camps Document](#) from the Ministry of Health.

3.3 Reducing the Risk of Spread of COVID-19

To further reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19, there are several measures that can be implemented where feasible.

3.3.1 Pools, Wading Pools and Deck Areas

- Seating in the swimming pool area should be removed or reduced to ensure spacing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) for physical distancing. For continuous seating areas such as benches, distance markings should be made on the bench.
- Place distance markings on the ground in front of attractions (slides, diving boards, etc.). If this is not possible, the equipment should be closed.
- Adjustments to bather loads will be necessary to ensure bathers have adequate physical distancing.
 - Small pools with limited space may need to be taken out of operation if there is insufficient space to guarantee physical distancing (e.g., spas, wading pools, therapy pools).
 - Consider increasing the width of lane ropes used during recreational swims should be minimized to enable bathers to maintain physical distancing.
- Any equipment provided to the public should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.
 - Operators may restrict equipment usage if disinfection is not possible, or encourage bathers to bring their own equipment (kickboards, water bottles, lifejackets, etc.) to the swimming pool.
- Access to high-contact aquatic features such as slides and climbing structures are to be restricted at this time.

3.3.2 Splash Pads

Even when operating with effective water disinfection levels, water playgrounds (splash pads) present higher risk of COVID-19 contamination due to its design and features that make it more difficult to maintain appropriate physical distancing and the number of surfaces that must be kept clean.

- To minimize large numbers of people in the splash pad area at one time, consider temporarily installing a fence around the perimeter to control access.

- Schedule one or more staff members to be on-site at outdoor splash pads during operating hours to provide access control and to supervise the number of people using the splash pad at any given time.
- Conduct regular disinfection of common contact surfaces, such as water play activation mechanisms, nozzles, rainbows, etc. when permitted for use in provincial reopening plans.

3.3.3 Whirlpools, saunas, steam rooms

Whirlpools, saunas, and steam rooms also present a higher risk of COVID-19 contamination due to design and features that make it more difficult to maintain appropriate physical distancing and the number of surfaces that must be kept clean.

- To minimize large numbers of people in these areas at one time, post signage indicating maximum person's in these areas at one time.
- Consider creating a schedule to organize and reduce the number of people in these areas at the same time.
- Conduct regular cleaning and disinfection of common contact surfaces such as door handles, activation switches, seating areas.

3.3.4 Change Rooms and Washrooms

Change rooms and washrooms can easily become a crowded space. Therefore, additional safety and cleaning precautions should be considered.

- Post physical distancing [signage](#) outside and inside the change rooms and washroom in case of lineups and use floor markers to designate 2 metres (6 feet) spacing.
- Post maximum occupancy signs outside of the washrooms to reduce crowding.
- Some urinals and sink basins may need to be decommissioned (taped off) if 2 metres (6 feet) spacing cannot be maintained.
- If possible, allow for one entrance and exit of a public washroom. If the premise only has one entrance/exit, signage must be posted to remind people about physical distancing.
- Place signage in each stall instructing users to flush the toilet with the lid down, if applicable.
- Post signage on [handwashing and hand sanitizing](#) at sinks and drinking fountains.
- Ensure that soap and paper towels are always available and are refilled frequently.
- Ventilation in the facility should be maximized.

Cleaning and disinfecting the facility and washrooms:

- Frequent [cleaning and disinfection](#) should take place, especially in commonly touched areas/surfaces.

- Baby change tables may be used and will require frequent cleaning and disinfection.
 - Ensure a daily log is noted on when the washrooms were cleaned and by whom.

3.3.5 Office Areas or other Common Areas

Review the [“Safe Return to Business: A Toolkit for the Windsor-Essex Business Community”](#) for information about reducing the risk of COVID-19 in office settings.

- Physical distancing should be maintained by staff. If this is not possible, provide non-medical face masks for staff.
- Staff should be discouraged from bringing and storing personal belongings into the facility.
- Consider staggering staff shifts and programs to allow for physical distancing measures or dividing staff into two groups that have no contact with each other.
- Staff should not share office supplies if possible, or regularly clean and disinfect high touch surfaces frequently (e.g. light switches, phones, door handles, buttons on office equipment, pens).

Staff should be encouraged to:

- Eat lunch individually or spaced out and not congregate in groups.
- Wash their hands thoroughly before eating and after using common areas.
- Not share cups, cutlery, etc.
- Disinfect table and counter after each use

4.0 Public Beaches

Please note that WECHU will not be conducting weekly beach monitoring or testing the water for the presence of E.coli during the 2020 beach season.

Public Beaches include any public bathing area that is owned/operated by a municipality or agency to which the general public has access and recreational use of the water is permitted. Owners/Operators of public beaches must adhere to provincial emergency orders and public health recommendations on gathering requirements to determine if activities and amenities such as swim lessons, group sports, or play equipment can be used by beach goers.

4.1 Communication

Communication of beach rules and restrictions should be done using a variety of approaches including:

- Social media posts and website content that can be shared by a variety of users
- News Releases with information for potential beach visitors.
- Posting [COVID-19 informational signage](#) at beach entrances including self-screening requirements
 - Inform visitors that anyone who is displaying [symptoms](#) of illness related to COVID-19 (e.g. fever, cough, difficulty breathing, muscle aches, fatigue, headache, sore throat, runny nose) or who have come into contact with someone who has COVID-19 symptoms, should not visit the beach.
- Posting [Cough and Sneeze Etiquette](#), [Hand Hygiene](#), and [Physical Distancing](#) posters in visible locations around the beach area.

4.2 Physical Distancing

The risk of transmission from recreational waters is very low, however, it is common to see people swimming and playing in the water and on the beach in close proximity to each other and COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets during close contact with others.

Therefore, the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is greater if physical distancing is not maintained. Owners/operators of public beaches should develop a plan and to ensure that beach visitors maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) or more from other people not from their household while in the water and while on the shore.

This plan should include a method of communicating this requirement as well as a process for enforcement and crowd control. Managers should consider the application of their own physical distancing by-laws (where enacted) and response from local police services and by-law officers. This plan can include:

- Designating a separate beach entrance and exit and making walking paths one way if possible.
- Limiting the number of visitors to the beach at any one time to ensure physical distancing is maintained. This may include tracking the numbers on the beach and closing entrances to other visitors until people leave the beach before letting others in.
- Posting [signage](#) to indicate how people can maintain a safe distance while at the beach and using ground markings and barriers to manage traffic flow.
- Review parking lots to determine if physical distancing can be maintained. If not, consider enhancing street parking or making some streets for pedestrian use only.
- If dogs are allowed on the beach, they should be on leash and at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from other people and animals at all times.

4.3 Public Washrooms

Public washrooms are important facilities as beaches open and they can be busy. Therefore, additional safety and cleaning precautions should be considered.

- Post physical distancing [signage](#) outside and inside the washroom in case of lineups and use floor markers to designate 2 metres (6 feet) spacing in busier washrooms.
- Post maximum occupancy signs outside of the washrooms to reduce crowding.
- Some urinals and sink basins may need to be decommissioned (taped off) if 2 metres (6 feet) spacing cannot be maintained.
- If possible, allow for one entrance and exit of the public washroom. If the premise only has one entrance/exit, signage must be posted to remind people about physical distancing.
- Place signage in each stall instructing users to flush the toilet with the lid down, if applicable.
- Post signage on [handwashing and hand sanitizing](#) at sinks and drinking fountains.
- Ensure that soap and paper towels are always available and are refilled frequently.
- Ventilation in the facility should be maximized.

Cleaning and disinfecting the facility and washrooms:

- Frequent [cleaning and disinfection](#) should take place, especially in commonly touched areas/surfaces.
- Baby change tables may be used and will require frequent cleaning and disinfection.
- Ensure a daily log is noted on when the washrooms were cleaned and by whom.

Portable toilets (if used)

- Post signage on handwashing and hand sanitizing at sinks. Ensure hand sanitizer and liquid soap is available and frequently refilled.

- Post physical distancing signage outside the portable toilet in case of lineups.
- Increase cleaning protocols and service intervals.
- To ensure physical distancing, the number of portable toilets may need to be increased.

4.4 Recreational and Safety Equipment

It is a decision for beach managers and businesses near the beach whether or not they rent out equipment. If sharing any type of equipment such as kickboards, pull buoys, or personal flotation devices (PFD), they must be cleaned and disinfected between each use.

5.0 Communication and Signage

There is a variety of signage available for printing and posting around a recreational water facility. Please download signage from the following webpages:

[WECHU Downloadable Signage for the Facility](#) (available in multiple languages)

[WECHU Posters on Preventing the Spread of COVID-19](#) (available in multiple languages)

[COVID-19 Posters from Public Health Ontario](#) (available multiple languages)

- Includes posters on proper hand washing, physical distancing, self-isolating, wearing a mask, cleaning and disinfecting of public areas, and self-monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19.

[Resources to prevent COVID-19 in the Workplace – Ontario](#)

- Includes posters related to gardening and landscaping, cleaning, equipment use, retail transactions, and offices.

6.0 References

[A Framework for Reopening our Province: Stage 2 \(Ontario\). June 8, 2020](#)

[Lifesaving Society \(June 2020\). Guide to Reopening Pools and Waterfronts](#)

[Ontario Recreation Facilities Association \(May 2020\). Recreation Facility COVID-19 Reentering and Reopening: Guiding Principles and Best Practices.](#)

[Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit \(June 5, 2020\). COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Public Beaches.](#)

[Windsor-Essex County Health Unit \(May 2020\) Safe Return to Business: A Public Health Toolkit for the Windsor-Essex Business Community.](#)



**WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY
HEALTH UNIT**

1005 Ouellette Avenue
Windsor, Ontario N9A 4J8

www.wechu.org

519-258-2146

© Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, June 2020.