



FITNESS STUDIOS AND GYMS CHECKLIST

SAFE RETURN TO BUSINESS



WINDSOR-ESSEX REGIONAL
Chamber of Commerce

For more detailed recommendations and links to additional helpful resources, please review the **“Safe Return to Business: A Public Health Toolkit for the Windsor-Essex Business Community”** document from the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit. *This checklist is meant to be a guide for businesses and should not take place of any legal advice or rules put in place by any governing body or legislation.*

This guidance is intended for facilities where sports and recreational fitness activities take place, including gymnasiums, health clubs, community centres, multi-purpose facilities, arenas, exercise studios, yoga and dance studios, and other fitness facilities.

Stay updated about the latest federal actions, current provincial restrictions, and local orders by visiting WECHU’s **Restrictions & Guidance webpage** and visit WECHU’s **Workplace Specific Webpage** to find other Safe Return to Business Checklists providing specific guidance to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

***This document is subject to change and is current as of September 22, 2020*

COMMUNICATION TO STAFF AND CUSTOMERS

- Inform customers about your re-opening timeline and changes to how your business will operate. Use as many methods of communication as possible, such as subscribed email lists, direct customer phone calls for urgent matters, social media, and your website.
- Encourage staff and event attendees to download the **COVID-19 Alert App** so that they may receive notifications if they were in close contact with someone who was tested positive for COVID-19.
- Post signage at entrances and throughout the building that clearly communicate procedures for physical distancing between staff and customers. This includes posters and floor markings such as instructional tape/stickers that direct the flow of people or customers waiting for services, including any outdoor waiting areas. Examples of signage can be found in Appendix B in the **Toolkit** or the **Resources & Signage** section of the WECHU website.
- Displaying **“Stand Here”** and **“Do Not Enter...If You Are Sick”** signage can serve as important components of a broader communication strategy to minimize the risk of COVID-19 spread between employees, staff, and customers. The two signs noted above (i.e., floor sticker and window cling) are available in English in limited supply by completing the **“Business Reopening Signage Order Form.”**

- Post signage to communicate entry procedures such as **hand sanitizing, sneeze and cough etiquette**, wearing of cloth masks, and/or screening for symptoms.
- Ensure employees are aware of common **COVID-19 symptoms** and instruct them to complete a daily **COVID-19 self-assessment** before reporting to work.
- Ensure customers and staff know to stay home if they are sick.
- Provide training to employees on effective **hand hygiene practices** and if required, the **proper way to put on and remove PPE** such as masks, face shields, gowns, and gloves.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Create policies and procedures that outline roles and responsibilities of the employer and the employee, including **cleaning and disinfection of the workplace**, how workers can report signs of illnesses, how to handle potentially high levels of employee absenteeism, staff return to work after COVID-19 illness, and how work will be scheduled.
- Create a response plan to handle an employee or client who becomes ill while at work or in your business.
- Decide which staff will be returning to work and what job function they will be assigned to. Consider staggered staff return dates and times to minimize large groups arriving at once.

HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- Order an adequate supply of approved disinfecting solution or wipes, and an alcohol-based hand rub (hand sanitizer) with a minimum of 60% alcohol content, liquid hand soap, and paper towels. These should be easily accessible to employees and clients.
- Print and display posters describing proper methods of hand washing and hand sanitizing.
- If a building has been shut down for an extended period of time, it is important to perform a general building inspection that includes:
 - Security system checks.
 - First aid supply checks.
 - Ensuring all tools and equipment are in good working order.
 - Discarding any expired or spoiled inventory.
 - Checking for evidence of pest/rodent infestation such as droppings.
 - Checking the HVAC system to ensure it is in good working order and replace filters if necessary.
 - Flushing all drinking water taps for at least 5 minutes.
 - Performing a deep cleaning and disinfection throughout the business.
- Complete any needed modifications in areas where there will be staff and/or clients, to assist with physical distancing and proper cleaning and disinfection. For example:

- Install Plexiglas barriers at check-outs and/or between workers who must work in close proximity to each other.
- Replacing fabric/plush furniture with hard surfaces that can be easily cleaned and disinfected.
- Providing additional garbage bins for safe disposal of used PPE, tissues, and paper towels.
- Choose your information sources wisely. Check the [WECHU website](#) regularly for updates and helpful resources and bookmark official municipal, provincial and federal government websites.
- If required, order **supplies** including disposable masks for clients and disposable or reusable masks for staff. Medical masks should not be used as these are being conserved for health care workers. Print and display posters describing **proper usage**.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Gyms and fitness studios are exempt from the mandatory face covering **class order** issued by the Medical Officer of Health, however, employees and fitness members are encouraged to use face coverings when not engaging in exercise or other physical activity that would otherwise make wearing a mask difficult.
 - Local municipalities may have enacted by-laws in addition to the Section 22 class order issued by Windsor-Essex County's Medical Officer of Health under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, mandating the use of face coverings in commercial establishments. **Refer to WECHU's 'Face Masks and Coverings' webpage or your local municipality's webpage for more information about the requirements for your facility.**
- Notify the health unit for a **pre-opening inspection of any pools, spas or whirlpools** that you have on site as per Ontario Reg. 565: Public Pools.
- Saunas and steam rooms must continue to remain closed until further notice.
- Facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities, including gymnasiums, health clubs, community centres, multi-purpose facilities, arenas, exercise studios, yoga and dance studios and other fitness facilities, may open for sports and recreational fitness activities if they comply with the following conditions:
 - Every person who engages in sports or a recreational fitness activity at the facility, other than a team sport, must maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person at all times during the activity.
 - The total number of members of the public permitted to be at the facility in a class, organized program or organized activity at any one time must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from other persons in the facility, and in any event cannot exceed:
 - 50 persons **per room**, if any of the classes, organized programs or organized activities taking place at the time are indoors, or
 - 100 persons, if all of the classes, organized programs or organized activities taking place at the time are outdoors.

- **Please Note:** Based on the space available, facilities may adopt their own protocols that are more restrictive than the provincial guidance.
- Assign spaces for organized fitness classes and floor markings to indicate where each person should exercise. Consider greater distance requirements or reduced occupancy for classes that involve high-intensity (e.g., rapid inhalation, deep exhalation) and/or range of movement (e.g., dance fitness, medicine ball, or kettlebell exercises). These activities may result in greater dispersion of respiratory droplets. Develop a procedure for how will this be monitored, enforced, and communicated.
- Consider using a booking system for classes and pre-booking workout sessions. Request that clients arrive no earlier than five minutes before their scheduled class or session to avoid crowding. Consider keeping a record of their contact information, as well as their check-in and checkout time to facilitate contact tracing in the event of an outbreak.
- Staggering schedules for the use of all the amenities in the facility (e.g., workout areas, classes, rinks, courts, spectator viewing, etc.) to support patron flow and physical distancing in common areas (including entrances, exits, stairwells, elevators). This also includes amenities that are part of a community centre, multi-purpose facility, or other complex with multiple uses that are not for sport and recreational fitness. Ensure that once the activity is completed, patrons exit the facility.
- Consider blocked times for the use of amenities that are staggered in order to minimize crowding in common areas within the facility.
- Enough time should be allocated to allow for the cleaning and disinfecting of sport and recreational fitness areas and equipment at established intervals (e.g., between bookings).
- Limit the use of high-powered fans as it may result in a greater dispersion of exhaled droplets from person to person. Consider removing or putting out of service signs on hand dryers in washrooms or change rooms.
 - Ceiling fans high up in the room (e.g., 25 feet up in a gym), are less of a concern than ceiling fans on low ceilings. Pedestal fans or high-powered fans on/near the floor should also not be used.
- Discourage activities that require close contact between people (e.g., needing “spotters” or activities that require a partner). If partners are required, ensure that they are from the same household or social circle. Coaching/instructional sessions should be conducted in a manner that minimizes close contact.
 - Wrestling or martial arts activities that require close contact (i.e. grappling, sparring) are permitted only between members from the same household or social circle. General classes may resume with physical distancing maintained between all others.
- Establish policies and procedure on how physical distancing will be ensured in all fitness areas (e.g., cardio machines, free weight area, locker rooms, or pool and spa areas). Consider turning off or moving some machines to support physical distancing.
- Consider arranging machines and equipment to facilitate at least two metres distance between patrons within a workout or class area, including the removal or blocking of machines and equipment to prevent their use. Some alternative options include:

- Installing of non-permeable barriers between machines and equipment (covering the entire space between the machines or equipment) if they cannot be moved to accommodate physical distancing, as well as at customer service counters and screening locations.
- For high-intensity physical activity (e.g., rows of treadmills and elliptical machines), consider a physical distance of more than two metres between equipment.
- Post signs to inform customers of the maximum occupancy for areas or rooms (e.g., locker rooms, showers, washrooms) in your facility. When determining occupancy levels, the number of people permitted in a space at any one time should be limited to the number of people that can safely maintain physical distancing of at least two metres.
- Limit drinking directly from the water fountain and instead encourage the filling of water bottles only. Ensure that the water fountain is cleaned after each use.
- Provide hand sanitizer and low-level disinfectant sprays or wipes for guests throughout the facility.
- Clean and disinfect** common use areas such as restrooms and, change rooms, showers, group exercise studios, work out areas, and other high touch surfaces more frequently.
- Fitness and sports equipment should be cleaned and disinfected frequently, such as between uses or at the end of play. This includes free weights, weight machines, treadmills, rowing machines, stationary bikes, classroom areas, balls, rackets, gloves, and other sports gear. It is recommended that a dedicated worker is available to ensure cleaning between uses.
- Identify hard-to-clean items (e.g., stretch bands, yoga blocks, straps, ropes, foam rollers, foam mats) and decide if access to them should be restricted. If possible, ask people to bring their own.
- Post signage directing members to clean their equipment and space before and after use and **sanitize hands often** during their workout. Be sure to provide plenty of cleaner, disinfectant, and paper towel near work out equipment.
- Minimize the need for touchpoints such as keys and lockers, and consider contactless check-in and touch-free payment systems.
- Considering the suspension of towel and other rental services. If offered, towels should be clearly separated (clean and used), appropriately laundered (hot water 60° to 90° Celsius), and dried well). All other rented materials must be disinfected between each use.

RESOURCES

Government of Ontario

[Guidance for facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities during COVID-19](#)

Government of Ontario

[Ontario Regulation 364/20 made under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act: Rules For Areas in Stage 3](#)