



COVID-19 INDUSTRY GUIDANCE: Fitness Facilities

Release date: **June 5, 2020**

Recommended effective date
no sooner than: **June 12, 2020**

All guidance should be implemented only with county health officer approval following their review of local epidemiological data including cases per 100,000 population, rate of test positivity, and local preparedness to support a health care surge, vulnerable populations, contact tracing, and testing.



OVERVIEW

On March 19, 2020, the State Public Health Officer and Director of the California Department of Public Health issued an order requiring most Californians to stay at home to disrupt the spread of COVID-19 among the population.

The impact of COVID-19 on the health of Californians is not yet fully known. Reported illness ranges from very mild (some people have no symptoms) to severe illness that may result in death. Certain groups, including people aged 65 or older and those with serious underlying medical conditions, such as heart or lung disease or diabetes, are at higher risk of hospitalization and serious complications. Transmission is most likely when people are in close contact with an infected person, even if that person does not have any symptoms or has not yet developed symptoms.

Precise information about the number and rates of COVID-19 by industry or occupational groups, including among critical infrastructure workers, is not available at this time. There have been multiple outbreaks in a range of workplaces, indicating that workers are at risk of acquiring or transmitting COVID-19 infection. Examples of these workplaces include long-term care facilities, prisons, food production, warehouses, meat processing plants, and grocery stores.

As stay-at-home orders are modified, it is essential that all possible steps be taken to ensure the safety of workers and the public.

Key prevention practices include:

- ✓ physical distancing to the maximum extent possible,
- ✓ use of face coverings by employees (where respiratory protection is not required) and fitness facility patrons,
- ✓ frequent handwashing and regular cleaning and disinfection,
- ✓ training employees on these and other elements of the COVID-19 prevention plan.

In addition, it will be critical to have in place appropriate processes to identify new cases of illness in workplaces and, when they are identified, to intervene quickly and work with public health authorities to halt the spread of the virus.

PURPOSE

This document provides guidance for fitness facilities to support a safe, clean environment for workers.

NOTE: Fitness facilities with playgrounds should keep those areas closed until such facilities are allowed to resume modified or full operation. When allowed to reopen to modified or full operation, refer to guidance on the [COVID-19 Resilience Roadmap website](#). This guidance does not apply to day care or child care services, youth camps, team or contact sports, school and educational activities, and other public gatherings. For guidance on summer camps, outdoor recreation, and child care, refer to the guidance on the [COVID-19 Resilience Roadmap website](#). Most organized activities and sports such as basketball,

baseball, soccer, and football that are held on park fields, open areas, and courts are not permitted to the extent that they require coaches and athletes who are not from the same household or living unit to be in close proximity, which increases their potential for exposure to COVID-19. Members of the same household may engage in such activities and sports together.

The guidance is not intended to revoke or repeal any employee rights, either statutory, regulatory or collectively bargained, and is not exhaustive, as it does not include county health orders, nor is it a substitute for any existing safety and health-related regulatory requirements such as those of Cal/OSHA.¹ Stay current on changes to public health guidance and state/local orders, as the COVID-19 situation continues. Cal/OSHA has more safety and health guidance on their [Cal/OSHA Guidance on Requirements to Protect Workers from Coronavirus webpage](#). CDC has additional guidance [for businesses and employers](#).



Worksite Specific Plan

- Establish a written, worksite-specific COVID-19 prevention plan at every facility, perform a comprehensive risk assessment of all work areas, and designate a person at each facility to implement the plan.
- Identify contact information for the local health department where the facility is located for communicating information about COVID-19 outbreaks among employees.
- Train and communicate with employees and employee representatives on the plan.
- Regularly evaluate the workplace for compliance with the plan and document and correct deficiencies identified.
- Investigate any COVID-19 illness and determine if any work-related factors could have contributed to risk of infection. Update the plan as needed to prevent further cases.
- Identify close contacts (within six feet for 15 minutes or more) of an infected employee and take steps to isolate COVID-19 positive employee(s) and close contacts.
- Adhere to the guidelines below. Failure to do so could result in workplace illnesses that may cause operations to be temporarily closed or limited.



Topics for Employee Training

- Information on [COVID-19](#), how to prevent it from spreading, and which underlying health conditions may make individuals more susceptible to contracting the virus.
- Self-screening at home, including temperature and/or symptom checks using [CDC guidelines](#).
- The importance of not coming to work if employees have symptoms of COVID-19 as [described by the CDC](#) such as a frequent cough, fever, difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, recent loss of taste or smell, or if they or someone they live with have been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- To seek medical attention if their symptoms become severe, including persistent pain or pressure in the chest, confusion, or bluish lips or face. Updates and further details are available on [CDC's webpage](#).

- The importance of frequent handwashing with soap and water, including scrubbing with soap for 20 seconds (or using hand sanitizer with at least 60% ethanol (preferred) or 70% isopropanol (if the product is inaccessible to unsupervised children) when employees cannot get to a sink or handwashing station, per [CDC guidelines](#)).
- The importance of physical distancing, both at work and off work time (see Physical Distancing section below).
- Proper use of face coverings, including:
 - Face coverings do not protect the wearer and are not personal protective equipment (PPE).
 - Face coverings can help protect people near the wearer, but do not replace the need for physical distancing and frequent handwashing.
 - Face coverings must cover the nose and mouth.
 - Employees should wash or sanitize hands before and after using or adjusting face coverings.
 - Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - Face coverings should be washed or discarded after each shift.
- Ensure temporary or contract workers at the facility are also properly trained in COVID-19 prevention policies and have necessary supplies and PPE. Discuss these responsibilities ahead of time with organizations supplying temporary and/or contract workers.
- Information on employer or government-sponsored leave benefits the employee may be entitled to receive that would make it financially easier to stay at home. See additional information [on government programs supporting sick leave and worker's compensation for COVID-19](#), including employee's sick leave rights under [the Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) and employee's rights to workers' compensation benefits and presumption of the work-relatedness of COVID-19 pursuant to the Governor's [Executive Order N-62-20](#).



Individual Control Measures and Screening

- Provide temperature and/or symptom screenings for all employees at the beginning of their shift and any vendors, contractors, or other workers entering the facility. Make sure the temperature/symptom screener avoids close contact with workers to the extent possible. Both screeners and employees should wear face coverings for the screening.
- If requiring self-screening at home, which is an appropriate alternative to providing it at the establishment, ensure that screening was performed prior to the worker leaving the home for their shift and follows [CDC guidelines](#), as described in the Topics for Employee Training section above
- Encourage workers who are sick or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 to stay home.
- Employers should provide and ensure workers use all required protective equipment, including eye protection and gloves where necessary.
- Employers should consider where disposable glove use may be helpful to supplement frequent handwashing or use of hand sanitizer; examples are for workers who are screening others for symptoms or handling commonly touched items.
- Employees should wash hands on arrival at work, after working with each fitness facility member, after touching their face covering, after using the restroom, and when leaving work.
- Face coverings are strongly recommended when employees are in the vicinity of others. Workers should have face coverings available and wear them in the fitness facility, offices, or in company-owned vehicles when traveling with others. Face covering are particularly important if physical distancing cannot be maintained on the job (for example, personal trainers and staff assisting members with exercises). Face coverings must not be shared. Employers are generally encouraged to provide face coverings but must provide them when required by employer rules or these guidelines.
- If possible, implement a reservation system for the facility. Utilize the reservation system to contact patrons with reservations 24 hours before their scheduled arrival to confirm their reservation and ask if they or someone in their household is exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms. If the patron answers in the affirmative the patron should be reminded that they should only utilize the fitness facility if they do not pose a health risk

to other patrons or fitness facility staff. Such communication can be done via app, email, or text, if possible.

- Patrons should be temperature and/or symptom screened upon arrival and asked to use hand sanitizer and to wear face coverings to the extent possible while in the facility, particularly when physical distancing is difficult.
- Remind patrons in advance to bring a face covering and make them available to anyone who arrives without one. It is highly recommended that patrons wear face coverings when entering and leaving the facility and should consider wearing them during workouts. Considerations should be made for members who are unable or unwilling to wear a face covering and ensure that they are able to maintain physical distance.
- Fitness facilities must take reasonable measures, including posting signage at all entrances and in strategic and highly-visible locations, to remind employees and the public that they should practice physical distancing and that the use of face coverings is highly recommended.



Cleaning and Disinfecting Protocols

- Evaluate the existing cleaning and disinfecting protocols for the fitness facility, including reception areas, locker rooms, restrooms, changing areas, and showers and update the cleaning protocols where necessary. Fitness facilities should be prepared to:
 - Develop a detailed schedule and adjust or modify operating hours to provide adequate time for regular, thorough cleaning and disinfecting throughout the day.
 - Perform thorough cleaning throughout the day in high traffic areas, such as reception and lobby areas, changing rooms, locker rooms, and break rooms and areas of ingress and egress including stairways, stairwells, escalators, handrails, and elevator controls.
 - Frequently disinfect commonly used surfaces, including personal exercise machines and equipment, countertops, vending machines, doorknobs, and hand washing facilities.
 - Provide time for workers to implement cleaning practices during their shift. Cleaning assignments should be assigned during working hours as part of the employees' job duties.
 - Make sure all workers have been trained to use and have an adequate supply of all-purpose cleaners and disinfectants, when needed. Follow the complete [CDC guidelines for cleaning and](#)

[disinfection](#). Follow Cal/OSHA requirements and manufacturer instructions for safe use and required personal protective equipment for cleaning products.

- Workers should have enough ventilation (air flow) in areas where they are disinfecting. If cleaning in a bathroom or other small space, make sure the door and windows are propped open.
 - Clean HVAC intakes and returns daily.
 - Workers should be supplied with first aid supplies, including bandages or other items to cover any cuts, scratches, or open wounds on skin and have sufficient supply to change the bandages often.
 - Patrons should be reminded to maintain six feet of distance from janitorial or custodial staff. Implement a process to regularly check in with workers to ensure visitors are following this protocol. Ensure workers are able to share such information without fear of reprisal or retaliation.
 - Procure options for third-party cleaning companies to assist with the increased cleaning demand, as needed.
- Equip entrances and exits, exercise machines, fitness rooms, changing rooms and locker rooms, and other areas with proper sanitation products, including hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes, and provide personal hand sanitizers to staff who regularly engage with patrons (e.g., reception staff).
 - Require patrons to disinfect individual exercise equipment, mats, and machines before and after use with provided disinfecting wipes. Ensure that lined, non-touch trash receptacles are available throughout the fitness facility to dispose of used wipes.
 - If members are unable or unwilling to wipe/disinfect equipment after exercise, provide “ready to clean” tags for members to place on equipment after use, to ensure equipment is disinfected by staff before the next use.
 - Consider implementing a check-out system for patrons to utilize any small equipment and accessories (i.e. exercise bands, ropes, mats, foam rollers, etc.). Develop a process to clean and disinfect these items upon return.
 - Follow [CDC guidelines](#) to ensure that all water systems are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of [Legionnaires' disease](#) and other diseases associated with water.
 - Wherever possible, install touchless, automatic water dispensers for use with personal, reusable water bottles or single-use, disposable paper

cups. Display signage reminding staff and patrons that the bottle or cup should not touch the water dispenser. If a touchless water dispenser is not feasible, remind staff and patrons to wash their hands or use proper hand sanitizer before and after touching the water release button on drinking fountains.

- Encourage patrons to bring their own towels and mats and consider disbanding the provision of any facility-provided towels or personal hygiene products.
- For any towels, cloth wipes, or other laundered items that are used at the facility, follow [CDC guidelines](#) for those items. Provide a closed container where patrons can place used towels or other items. Ensure those items cannot be used again until properly laundered either by a commercial laundering service or a laundering process which includes immersion in water of at least 160 degrees Fahrenheit for at least 25 minutes. Store all clean linens in a clean, covered place. Ensure workers who handle dirty linens or laundry wear gloves.
- Amenities, including magazines, books, self-serve water stations (unless touchless), and other items for patrons, must be removed from reception areas and elsewhere in the fitness facility. Non-essential vanity items should also be removed from locker rooms to help reduce touch points and guest interactions.
- Staff and patrons should avoid shaking hands, bumping fists or elbows, and other physical contact. Staff should also avoid sharing tools, phones, electronics, and office supplies as much as possible and, where feasible, ensure staff have dedicated workstations for their personal use. Never share PPE.
- When choosing cleaning chemicals, employers should use products approved for use against COVID-19 on the [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)-approved](#) list and follow product instructions. Use disinfectants labeled to be effective against emerging viral pathogens, diluted household bleach solutions (5 tablespoons per gallon of water), or alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol that are appropriate for the surface. Provide employees training on manufacturer's directions and Cal/OSHA requirements for safe use. Workers using cleaners or disinfectants should wear gloves and other protective equipment as required by the product. Follow the [asthma-safer cleaning methods](#) recommended by the California Department of Public Health.
- Consider installing portable high-efficiency air cleaners, upgrading the building's air filters to the highest efficiency possible, and making other modifications to increase the quantity of outside air and ventilation in offices and other spaces.

- Place signage throughout the fitness facility emphasizing basic infection prevention measures, including the importance of wearing face coverings and frequent hand-washing.



Physical Distancing Guidelines

- Implement measures to ensure physical distancing of at least six feet between and among workers and patrons. This can include use of physical partitions or visual cues (e.g., floor markings, colored tape, or signs to indicate to where workers and/or patrons should stand during check-in at reception areas or when waiting to use equipment).
- Space equipment at least six feet apart, with greater distancing for treadmills and other high-exertion aerobic fitness equipment. Equipment can be arranged in an “X” pattern to provide greater distancing. Physical barriers can also be helpful to create distancing or segregate exercise areas.
- Equip the front desk area with Plexiglas or other impermeable barriers, if feasible, to minimize the interaction between reception staff and patrons. Implement virtual, touchless check-in tools, if possible, so that patrons do not have to utilize the reception space.
- Consider suspending non-core activities, including retail operations, spa services, childcare, family programming, and food service. If fitness facilities operate such amenities, they should review the related guidance for these services on the [COVID-19 Resilience Roadmap website](#).
- Consider implementing special hours designated for high risk or medically-vulnerable populations, including seniors with admittance by reservation only.
- Evaluate maximum occupancy rules based on the size of the facility to develop a capacity plan that supports physical distancing and limits the number of patrons allowed in the facility at a given time to a number permitting such distancing. Other considerations to support physical distancing in the facility for patrons could include:
 - Implementing an online reservation-based system, as suggested in the Individual Control Measures and Screening section of this document, to avoid patrons queuing in the facility or outside and help maintain occupancy levels.
 - Limiting the number of patrons in the facility at one time. Only those patrons that are actually exercising should be inside the facility. Patrons should not wait in the reception area.

- Using one-way foot traffic patterns throughout the fitness facility with visual cues and signs.
- Removing communal furniture and/or cordoning off member lounge areas.
- Staggering available lockers in locker rooms to maintain physical distancing.
- Spacing all equipment and machines at least six feet apart or taking some out of service to achieve physical distancing.
- Adjusting personal training so that the exercise instructor maintains a minimum of six feet of physical distance. Personal trainers must use face coverings and avoid any close contact. Patrons should be strongly encouraged to wear a face covering while receiving instruction.
- Modifying group training classes to limit the class size to ensure a minimum of six feet of physical distance between patrons and/or move the classes outdoors or to larger spaces like full-sized basketball courts, if possible. Group exercise classes should only be offered if distancing requirements can be maintained and there is no person-to-person physical contact.
- High contact programs that require close contact less than six feet in distance should be suspended. This would include activities such as group sporting events, organized intermural activities, pick-up basketball, or organized races.
- Adjust in-person meetings for staff, if they are necessary, to ensure physical distancing and use virtual options or smaller meetings at facilities to maintain physical distancing guidelines.
- Consider offering workers who request modified duties options that minimize their contact with patrons and other employees (e.g., managing administrative needs through telework).
- Stagger employee breaks, in compliance with wage and hour regulations, to maintain physical distancing protocols.
- Close breakrooms, use barriers, or increase distance between tables/chairs to separate workers and discourage congregating during breaks. Where possible, create outdoor break areas with shade covers and seating that ensures physical distancing.



Additional Considerations for Communal Restrooms and Shower Facilities

- Fitness facilities should consider staffing and other capacity and resource needs to ensure that locker rooms and shower facilities can be cleaned and disinfected regularly throughout the day.
- Shared restroom facilities and locker rooms should be cleaned regularly throughout the day using [EPA-registered disinfectants](#). High-touch surfaces such as faucets, toilets, doorknobs, and light switches must be frequently cleaned and disinfected.
- Create and post a cleaning schedule for the restroom facilities and locker rooms. Post the cleaning schedule on the front of the door so patrons know when they can/cannot use the restroom and/or locker room. Make sure to close the restroom during the cleaning and disinfecting process.
- Consider using a checklist or audit system to track how often cleaning is conducted.
- Only allow shower and locker room use if partitions are in place or signs have been posted to specify physical distancing requirements. If partitions or proper distancing are not possible, these facilities should remain closed.
- Ensure that sanitary facilities stay operational and are continuously stocked at all times. Provide additional soap, paper towels, and hand sanitizer when needed. Install hands-free devices, if possible, including motion sensor sinks faucets, soap dispensers, sanitizer dispensers, and paper towel dispensers.
- Doors to multi-stall restrooms should be able to be opened and closed without touching the handles, using opening-devices, or powered door operators with the hand, whenever possible. If the door cannot be opened without touching the handle or door-operator with the hand, place a trash-receptacle by the door to ensure a paper towel can be readily disposed of when operating the door. The location and positioning of waste receptacles should not interfere with egress, evacuation, emergency equipment, or any reasonable accommodations provided under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Make sure trash cans are emptied regularly.
- Fitness facility patrons should be instructed that sinks could be an infection source and should avoid placing hairbrushes and other items

directly on counter surfaces. Totes could also be used for personal items to limit their contact with other surfaces in the restroom or locker room.

- Provide information on how to wash hands properly, including hanging signs in restrooms.



Additional Considerations for Swimming Pools / Aquatic Venues

- Fitness facilities with swimming pools or splash pads should take additional steps to ensure those facilities are properly cleaned and disinfected for patron use, according to [CDC guidelines](#).
- Please note that saunas, steam rooms, and hot tubs should remain closed.
- Maintain proper disinfectant levels (1-10 parts per million free chlorine or 3-8 ppm bromine) and pH (7.2-8).
- Consult with the company or engineer that designed the aquatic venue to decide which [List N disinfectants approved by the EPA](#) are best for the aquatic venue. Ensure the [safe and correct use](#) and storage of disinfectants, including storing products securely away from children.
- Set up a system so that furniture and equipment (e.g., lounge chairs) that needs to be cleaned and disinfected is kept separate from furniture that has already been cleaned and disinfected. Label containers for used equipment that has not yet been cleaned and disinfected and containers for cleaned and disinfected equipment.
- Encourage patrons to bring and use their own towels wherever possible. If the facility is providing them, launder towels according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water temperature and dry items completely. Handle towels with disposable gloves and minimal disturbance, i.e., do not shake them.
- Discourage people from sharing items, particularly those that are difficult to clean and disinfect or those that are meant to come in contact with the face (e.g., goggles, nose clips, and snorkels).
- Ensure that the facility has adequate equipment for patrons, such as kick boards, pool noodles, and other flotation devices, to minimize sharing wherever possible. Clean and disinfect the items after each use.
- For indoor aquatic venues, introduce and circulate outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods.

However, do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk to staff, patrons, or swimmers.

- Change the deck layout and other areas surrounding the pool to ensure that the standing and seating areas can support physical distancing requirements. This could include removing lounge chairs or taping off areas to discourage use.
- Provide physical cues or guides (e.g., lane lines in the water or chairs and tables on the deck) and visual cues (e.g., tape on the decks, floors, or sidewalks) and signs to ensure that staff, patrons, and swimmers stay at least six feet apart from one another, both in and out of the water.
- Where feasible, install impermeable physical barriers such as Plexiglas where staff and patrons must interact and physical distancing is difficult.
- Consider implementing reservations for pool use or implementing other mechanisms to support physical distancing. This could include reserving full-lanes for individual lap swimming and half-lanes for individual household use.
- Ensure that lifeguards who are actively lifeguarding are not also expected to monitor handwashing, use of cloth face coverings, or physical distancing. Assign this monitoring responsibility to another staff member.
- Aquatic venues should avoid activities that promote group gatherings and should be aware of local policies on gathering requirements to determine if aquatic fitness classes, swim lessons, swim team practices, swim meets, or pool parties can be held.
- CDC's [Model Aquatic Health Code](#) has more recommendations to prevent illness and injuries at public pools in parks.



Additional Considerations for Food Service (Including Juice Bars, Snack Bars, and Concessions) and Retail

- Food service operations, including juice bars, snack bars, and other concessions must be run in accordance with current orders and guidelines for such establishments available on the [COVID-19 Resilience Roadmap website](#). All self-service food stations should be closed.
- Where possible, patrons should order food items online or over the phone and food should be available for pick-up. Patrons are strongly recommended to wear face coverings when picking up pre-ordered items from the snack bar or concessionaire. If not possible to pre-order

food items, ensure that those waiting in line to order can maintain appropriate physical distancing.

- Snack bars and concessionaires should sell pre-packed and individually wrapped food wherever possible. Wrap silverware or plasticware individually within a napkin so people are not picking them out of a group of utensils in a basket, cup, or box.
- Encourage the use of credit cards or accept payment over the phone, if possible, for food and retail items. Ensure staff wipe down the payment system between uses.
- Additional guidelines for restaurants and retail operations are available on the [COVID-19 Resilience Roadmap website](#).

¹Additional requirements must be considered for vulnerable populations. Fitness facilities must comply with all [Cal/OSHA](#) standards and be prepared to adhere to its guidance as well as guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and the [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#). Additionally, employers must be prepared to alter their operations as those guidelines change.

