

GUIDANCE FOR SWIMMING POOLS AND WHIRLPOOLS

Overview

Under current Chief Medical Officer of Health Orders, businesses and entities are required to:

- implement practices to minimize the risk of transmission of infection among attendees;
- provide procedures for rapid response if an attendee develops symptoms of illness;
- ensure that attendees maintain high levels of sanitation and personal hygiene;
- comply, to the extent possible, with the [COVID-19 General Relaunch Guidance](#), this guidance, and any other applicable Alberta Health guidance found at: <https://www.alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx>.

This document has been developed to support operators of swimming pools and whirlpools in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 among attendees (including workers, volunteers, patrons and the general public). The guidance provided outlines public health and infection prevention and control measures, specific to swimming pools and whirlpools.

Indoor and outdoor whirlpools, hot tubs, dry saunas & steam saunas are permitted to be open.

Operators of public swimming pools must continue to comply with requirements in the [Public Swimming Pools Regulation](#) and [Pool Standards](#). Operators are encouraged to call their local public health inspector with AHS prior to re-opening an aquatic facility. Public health inspectors can assist in providing resources and support for reopening swimming pool facilities during pandemic.

This document and the guidance within it is subject to change and will be updated as needed. Current information related to COVID-19 can be found: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-information.aspx>.

COVID-19 Risk Mitigation

General Guidance

- Capacity limits should be set to ensure physical distancing of 2 metres between people from different households/cohorts is maintained.
 - To help maintain capacity, operators should encourage patrons to book/sign up ahead of time.
 - Consider setting a time limit on facility use for each patron.
 - There can be up to 100 seated spectators in the facility, as long as 2 metres physical distancing is maintained between [households/cohorts](#).

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage and facilitate staff and attendees to stay up to date with developments related to COVID-19.• Notify staff and clients of the steps being taken to prevent the risk of transmission, and the importance of their roles in these measures:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ COVID-19 mitigation adopted by the facility, such as physical distancing expectations and any changes to capacity or hours of operations;○ Hygiene and respiratory etiquette.○ COVID-19 signage should be posted in highly visible locations:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ “Help prevent the spread” posters are available.▪ Prohibitions on attendance by sick or isolating persons.▪ When possible, provide necessary information in languages that are preferred by clients.• All Albertans must follow CMOH Order 05-2020, which establishes legal requirements for quarantine and isolation.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19; with a history of international travel in the last 14 days; or with close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days must remain at home.• Hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol should be placed in convenient locations throughout the facility.• Operators should develop a plan to provide isolation for an attendee if needed.• Consider collecting the names and contact information of attendees to support public health contact tracing efforts in the event that an attendee tests positive or an outbreak is identified.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Providing information is voluntary for attendees. An organization must obtain an individual’s consent and notify them about the purpose and legal authority for the collection.
Points of Entry/ Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical barriers are recommended to separate the front desk attendant and the patrons.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Consider a contact-free check-in for staff or patrons.○ Limit physical contact by using online payment and registration.○ If wrist-bands are required, the operator should use self-applied bracelets and provide waste containers at the facility exit point for their disposal.• Provide hand sanitizer (60% alcohol or higher) at entry and exit points, and encourage patrons to also bring their own.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wherever possible, establish processes and reminders for physical distancing between patrons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider one-way flow of movement and separate entrances and exits to the facility and rooms throughout the building.
<p>Physical Distancing</p>	<p>Physical distancing means maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres between attendees who are not from the same household at all times.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wherever possible, establish measures around the facility such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One-way traffic measures for showers, change rooms and washrooms; ○ Place stickers or signage on the wall/floor to establish two-metre distancing; ○ Space deck seating in accordance with two-metre physical distancing requirements; ○ Consider options to reduce congregating of swimmers, patrons and staff. • For public access facilities (e.g. drop-in), the width of swim lanes should be adjusted to enable physical distancing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider alternating lanes, for example, having one-way swimming per lane (e.g., swimmers use middle of the lane only and return by the adjacent lane).
<p>Swimming Lessons, Swim Clubs & Aquatic Fitness Classes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider staggered times for practices and lessons. • Reduce the overall number of participants in classes and swim camps in accordance with day camp guidance to maintain physical distancing where possible. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Distancing should be maintained between distinct cohort groups at all times. • Allow adequate time to disinfect any shared equipment between each class. <p>Cohorts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For structured activities (e.g. swim classes, clubs, teams), where physical distancing of participants would be difficult (e.g. instruction), create cohort groups. • Each cohort group can have a maximum of 50 individuals, which includes the instructors/coaches/swimmers/etc. Members of the cohort group

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	<p>should still minimize close contact where possible. See the Guidance for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation for more information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If more than one cohort group is using a pool at one time, barriers or 2 metre distance should be used between cohort groups. <p>Dryland Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dryland should only occur on-deck where there is sufficient space to allow for physical distancing between cohorts or individuals.• Consider having dryland occur in other settings in or near the facility (e.g., outside, or in an attached gymnasium or classroom).• Refer to the Lifesaving Society and Canadian Red Cross for specific guidance on mitigating the risk of COVID transmission during dryland activities (e.g., rescue breathing simulations). <p>For learning held in a classroom setting (e.g., leadership courses), consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refer to the Lifesaving Society and Canadian Red Cross for specific guidance on mitigating the risk of COVID transmission during aquatic leadership courses.• Ensure classroom set-up and seating facilitates 2 metre physical distance between participants and between the participants and the facilitators.• Ensure all participants have their own materials and are brought to each session. Do not allow participants to share materials.• Limit group work.• Encourage participants to come up with and use games/formations/etc that will facilitate physical distancing in their classes<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Consider options to limit the use of equipment in classes.• Ensure timelines to complete the practical aspect of the courses is flexible, to allow for quarantine or isolation, if necessary.
Pool Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limit the use of shared equipment wherever possible (e.g., removal of pool noodles, flutter boards).• Limit the use of pool toys for flotation aids and lessons only.• Clean and disinfect shared equipment (e.g., flutter boards, lifejackets, clip boards) and launder any rental towels between each use.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrons should not share uncleaned towels, goggles, or any other equipment other than with family members. • Encourage patrons to bring their own goggles and refrain from sharing.
<p>Cleaning and Disinfecting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to routine cleaning performed as required by the Regulation and Standards, increase frequency of sanitation of commonly touched surfaces (such as ladders, doorknobs, handrails, light switches, countertops, tables, deck fixtures, touch pads). • Cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces within steam rooms and dry saunas should be enhanced. To increase effectiveness, these amenities should be allowed to cool down before cleaning is performed. • Rescue equipment (tubes, cans, poles, ring buoys) should be cleaned and disinfected after each use. • Chlorinated pool water is an effective disinfectant and the risk of transmission from contact with properly treated pool water is considered minimal. Salt water pools are also chlorinated. • Wear disposable gloves when cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. Train staff on how to avoid cross-contamination when removing gloves.
<p>Masks and Protective Equipment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operators and attendees should keep up to date with the masking requirements set at the local level. • Masks may be worn by patrons on the deck or other areas of the facility. • Masks should not be worn in the water or when sitting in whirlpools or steam saunas. In these environments, moisture will decrease the mask’s effectiveness and present unnecessary safety risks. • Staff should wear personal protective equipment appropriate for work being performed (e.g., First Aid, resuscitation).
<p>Locker Rooms/Change Rooms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that surfaces, sinks and toilets are cleaned and disinfected regularly. • Remove common-use items from locker rooms. • Consider limiting lockers available so that physical distancing can be maintained (e.g., block every second locker). • Post occupancy limits for common areas such as change rooms/locker rooms, and washrooms.

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Staff and Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any staff member or volunteer exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and isolate.• Those with symptoms should be encouraged to arrange for testing through the AHS online assessment tool.• Ensure all staff are knowledgeable with respect to how COVID-19 is transmitted (i.e., droplet and contact transmission).• It is strongly recommended that at least one staff person on deck be designated as a “COVID-19 responsible person”. The primary function of this role would be to watch for adherence to physical distancing and all other public health guidance.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The COVID-19 responsible person should not be an on-duty lifeguard. Staff performing COVID-19 supervision should not be engaged in other duties.• Provide a consistent supply of hand soap, paper towels and garbage receptacles to encourage hand washing among staff and patrons.
Rapid Response and First Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilities are required to have a rapid response plan in place to manage symptomatic patrons and staff.• Refer to the Lifesaving Society, St. John’s Ambulance, and Canadian Red Cross for specific guidance on mitigating the risk of COVID transmission during First Aid.
Parties and Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For locations with indoor space rented for parties (e.g., birthdays) or gatherings, refer to the Guidance for Indoor Events
Retail & Food Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For locations with retail businesses within, see Guidance for Retail Businesses.• For facilities with food or beverage services within, see Guidance for Restaurants, Cafes, Pubs and Bars.