COVID-19 INFORMATION

GUIDANCE FOR SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND RECREATION – STAGE 2

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 Alberta.ca/BizConnect.

This document has been developed to support sport, physical activity and recreation organizations and facilities in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 among attendees (including participants, staff, volunteers, participants and the general public). The guidance outlines public health and infection prevention and control measures specific to (a) sport, physical activity and recreation (indoor and outdoor) and (b) the operation of indoor facilities.

COVID-19 droplet transmission is much more likely when individuals are in close contact. Further, the likelihood of transmission between individuals participating in sport, physical activity and recreation in an indoor setting is significantly higher. While transmission is less likely in an outdoor setting, where air flow is greater and there is more space for individuals to keep physically distanced, transmission can occur if public health guidance is not followed.

COVID-19 can also be transmitted if someone touches a contaminated surface and then touches their face without washing their hands. Many activities involve shared equipment among participants, coaches/staff, instructors, officials or volunteers (for example, shared baseballs, basketballs, volleyballs). The virus does not enter the body through skin; it enters through the eyes, nose or mouth when an individual touches their face. This is why regular hand hygiene and cleaning of high-touch surfaces are so important.

In addition to following the Government of Alberta’s guidance, those participating in organized activities sanctioned by, or affiliated with, a provincial or national organization should ensure they are also complying with their governing body’s guidelines, assuming they meet or exceed provincial requirements. It is recommended that every organization develop a publicly available written plan. A template can be found in the appendices of the General Relaunch Guidance. The Government of Alberta will not be approving written plans.

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 at Alberta.ca/covid19.
COVID-19 INFORMATION

GUIDANCE FOR SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND RECREATION – STAGE 2

1.0 Facility Considerations

General

- This guidance should be used in conjunction with any additional applicable facility-specific guidance on the Alberta Biz Connect website.
- Wherever possible, activities should be re-located to outdoor settings.
- Facility ventilation systems should be both operational and appropriate for the activities practiced within.
  - Facility owners may wish to consult with an expert in Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) for assistance.
- Support healthy indoor air quality by:
  - Discouraging use of scents to prevent sneezing and coughing.
  - Maintaining appropriate humidity levels.
  - Limiting the casual use of overhead ceiling fans or portable pedestal fans as much as possible. If fans are used, minimize air flow that directs current from one person directly toward another.
  - Air filters used in ventilation systems should consider MER-14 or High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) rated filters.
  - Discard air filters carefully to prevent the discharge of viral particles.
- Provide natural ventilation by opening windows and doors wherever possible to increase air flow.
- Designate a responsible person to oversee activities to ensure public health guidelines are followed.
- Consideration should be given to how to appropriately include or accommodate vulnerable persons such as seniors, those with disabilities and persons with compromised immune systems.
  - Examples include reducing attendance, offering virtual methods of engagement and dedicating certain rooms/times for those at greater risk.
  - Instructors/responsible persons may not know who is an at-risk person, so consideration may be given to beginning high-intensity group physical activities with a reminder that there may be increased risk of transmission in these settings, and spacing guidance should be carefully followed.
**COVID-19 INFORMATION**

**GUIDANCE FOR SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND RECREATION – STAGE 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Staff and Volunteers</strong></th>
<th><strong>Points of Entry and Controlling Access</strong></th>
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| • Remove unnecessary communal items such as candy, magazines and complimentary phone chargers. Where disposable water cups are provided, place a garbage receptacle close by for any used cups.  
• Indoor child play centres remain closed at this time. | • Physical barriers are recommended to separate front-desk attendants and patrons.  
• Provide hand sanitizer (60% alcohol or higher) at entry and exit points, and encourage patrons to also bring their own.  
• Limit physical contact by using online payment and registration or hands-free check in. If wrist-bands are required, the operator should use self-applied bracelets and advise patrons to remove them once they arrive home. |
| • Assign equipment and supplies to individual staff members and avoid any unnecessary sharing.  
• Staff who are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, who have returned from international travel in the past 14 days, or who have been in close contact with a case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days must stay home.  
• It is recommended that all staff be knowledgeable with respect to how COVID-19 is transmitted (i.e., droplet and contact transmission).  
• It is suggested that facilities designate a responsible person to ensure public health guidelines are followed (e.g., watching for adherence to physical distancing).  
  o The responsible person should not be someone engaged in other critical duties (e.g., referee, lifeguard).  
• Encourage hand hygiene among staff.  
• Staff should wear masks when they are not separated by a physical barrier or 2 metre distance from participants. Guidance is available here.  
  o Other personal protective equipment may be appropriate depending on the task being performed (e.g., First Aid or resuscitation).  
• When facility staff are transferring a participant with a disability in and out of equipment, or assisting caregivers with an activity, both the staff member and participant should wear masks whenever a 2 meter distance cannot be maintained. |
COVID-19 INFORMATION
GUIDANCE FOR SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND RECREATION – STAGE 2

- To promote distancing, facilities should consider reducing capacity in each room, venue, court, pool or ice surface in the facility.
- Consider using a booking system that sets out specified activity durations (e.g., 1 hour workout periods, 90-minute ice times).
- Request that participants arrive no more than 5-10 minutes before their appointment or game. Coordinate appointment or game times to avoid crowding and reduce wait times.
- Encourage patrons to limit their time spent in the facility and to maintain physical distancing when returning to vehicles or homes.

Facility Screening
- Consider implementing active screening of attendees (where applicable) and staff for symptoms of fever, sore throat, cough, runny nose or difficulty breathing.
  - Operators may choose to use the [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](https://www.gov.ab.ca/covid19/health-care-workers).
  - The Alberta Health Services COVID-19 [Self-Assessment](https://www.gov.ab.ca/covid19/) tool can be used by attendees.
- Any participant that is exhibiting any symptoms cannot enter the facility or participate.

Sanitation, Cleaning and Disinfecting
- In addition to routine facility cleaning protocols, increase frequency of sanitation of commonly touched surfaces and shared equipment (such as water fountain handles, doorknobs, handrails, light switches, countertops, tables, equipment handles and consoles).
  - A written cleaning and disinfecting schedule is recommended. Encourage staff to document the time a specific area is cleaned.
- Increase the frequency of cleaning of gymnasium floors to reduce the risk of transmission from shared objects (e.g., balls) and those who use wheelchairs.
- Provide hand sanitizer throughout the facility and ensure that hand washing sinks are fully stocked with soap and paper towels.
- Follow the cleaning and disinfecting guidance in the [General Relaunch Guidance](https://www.gov.ab.ca/covid19/industry-guidance).
  - Follow the disinfectant label instructions for use.
  - Consult the manufacturer’s instructions before applying disinfectant to any potentially sensitive equipment in the facility (i.e. touch pads, electronics).
- Ensure that used cleaning supplies are properly disposed of in a lined waste bin that is emptied at least daily.
## Locker Rooms and Change Rooms
- Facilities should discourage the use of locker rooms and change rooms whenever possible.
  - Encourage participants to come dressed for their activity.
- Set capacity limits on how many people can use locker rooms at the same time.
- Adjust lockers to enable physical distancing.
- Ensure that surfaces, sinks and toilets in are cleaned and disinfected regularly.
- Remove self-serve and common-use items such as hair dryers, cotton swabs and disposable razors.

## Physical Distancing
- Alter booking times of facility amenities (e.g., courts, pools, auxiliary rooms) to create a buffer between sessions.
- Participants and spectators are expected to maintain a distance of 2 metres in lobbies, change rooms, multi-purpose rooms, free-weight areas and while off the field of play (players’ bench, bleachers, etc.).
  - For high intensity physical activity (e.g., rows of treadmills and elliptical machines), consider physical barriers or at least three metres distancing between equipment.
  - Distancing exceptions can be made for those who are from the same household.
- Wherever possible, promote physical distancing by:
  - Promoting one-way traffic flow to avoid individuals from inadvertently interacting;
  - Placing stickers or signage on the wall/floor at 2 metre distances;
  - Spacing seats, or assigning seating, at 2 metre distances;
  - Limiting classes and group fitness to cohort groups only (e.g., assigned class times).
- Facilities should develop procedures that allow for uncongested drop off and pick up of participants. (e.g., drive-thru lanes for pick up and drop off of sport participants, dedicated entrances and exits for incoming and outgoing sport teams)
- Common area chairs and tables should be stacked, roped off or removed from the area to promote distancing.

## Spectators
- Spectators (excluding parents and guardians where necessary for player support) should be kept out of participant spaces (e.g., fields of play, courts, ice surfaces).
- Physical distancing of minimum 2 metres should be maintained by spectators/attendee at all times, unless from the same households or cohort family.
### COVID-19 INFORMATION

### GUIDANCE FOR SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND RECREATION – STAGE 2

- Up to a maximum of 100 seated spectators are allowed, provided a distance of 2 metres between attendees from different households/cohort families is maintained.
- It is strongly recommended that all spectators wear masks, especially in an indoor setting. Cheering and yelling is strongly discouraged at this time as it presents a high risk of spreading droplets.

### Encouraging Participant Hygiene

- Encourage participants to bring their own equipment to the facility. Wherever possible, limit the use of shared equipment unless participants engaged in the same activity are from the same household.
  - Participant-owned equipment, including sport gloves, should be visibly clean.
  - Equipment handled by hand or head (e.g., tennis balls, basketballs, soccer balls) during play should be frequently cleaned.
- Where rental equipment is provided, it should be assigned to one person only and be cleaned and disinfected upon return. Do not use equipment that cannot be disinfected.
- Participants should not share any personal items (e.g., water bottles, towels).
- Enable and encourage participants to perform frequent hand hygiene before, during and after the activity.
  - Participants can be encouraged to carry and use their own hand sanitizer.
- Participants should refrain from touching their eyes, nose, mouth and face while participating or while wearing sporting gloves.
- Encourage participants to exhibit good respiratory etiquette (i.e., sneezing or coughing into the crook of the elbow, no spitting, no clearing of nasal passages, coughing or sneezing into a tissue).

### Masks

- Guidance on how to wear a mask properly can be found [here](#).
- Patrons and participants may wear a mask when they are not engaging in intense physical activity.

### Communications

- Communicate to all participants (coaches/staff, instructors, officials, participants, and their guardians, volunteers) about the risk of COVID-19 and practices that should be undertaken to mitigate risk.
  - Communication platforms could include online registration forms, rental contracts and automated telephone switchboards.
### COVID-19 INFORMATION

**GUIDANCE FOR SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND RECREATION – STAGE 2**

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|   | Information posters and fact sheets can be downloaded [here](#). Place appropriate signs throughout the facility explaining:  
  - Physical distancing expectations  
  - Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette  
  - Cleaning and disinfection practices  
|   | In the event that a participant requires basic first aid, consider having a family member attend to the injured. If not possible, if the first aider is a facility employee they should use appropriate personal protective equipment, including a mask and gloves.  
| **Equipment** | Reconfigure fitness equipment (e.g., weight machines) to promote physical distancing. Consider installing physical barriers between equipment wherever increased distancing is not possible.  
  - It is strongly recommended that both physical barriers and at least 3 metres of distance greater distances be placed between equipment used for high intensity activities (e.g., treadmills, stationary bikes) to lessen the likelihood of transmission from higher exertion.  
|   | Have processes to ensure enhanced cleaning and disinfection of shared fitness equipment between each use by having readily available supplies and cleaning reminders and instructions located in accessible places. Facility staff should ensure that cleaning occurs between uses.  
| **Rapid Response to Symptomatic Individuals** | Facilities and organizers are required to have a rapid response plan in place to manage symptomatic participants, spectators and staff. A rapid response plan sets out a fast-action plan for operators when an attendee shows symptoms of COVID-19.  
  - Details on rapid response can be found in the [General Relaunch Guidance](#).  
|   | Plans should include:  
  - Immediate isolation of the symptomatic participant from others, including arrangement for safe travel home (e.g., no public transit).  
  - Consideration of suspension or temporary cancellation of the event.  
  - Cleaning and disinfecting of all equipment and surfaces that may have come into contact with the symptomatic participant.  
  - Performance of hand hygiene by remaining participants.  
| **Facility Amenities / Food and Beverage** | Venues that offer food or beverage services must adhere to the [Guidance for Restaurants, Cafes, Pubs, and Bars](#).
COVID-19 INFORMATION

GUIDANCE FOR SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND RECREATION – STAGE 2

- Ensure vending machines are cleaned frequently, in particular touch keypads.

2.0 General Considerations for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Considerations for Modifying Activities</th>
<th>To help plan activities, practices or games, consider the following:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>• Can the activity be modified to reduce the sharing of equipment touched by hands or sporting gloves?</td>
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<td>• Can the activity be modified to increase opportunities for physical distancing?</td>
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<td>• Can the activity be done outdoors instead of indoors?</td>
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<td>• Can activities, practices and game play be shortened, or performed with fewer participants?</td>
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Mini-leagues: Cohorting Participants

- All aspects of organized sport, physical activity and recreation may proceed (programming, training, practice and competition) if physical distancing is possible.
- If those not participating in physical activity are unable to maintain safe physical distancing, masks should be worn. In sports and activities that generally involve interaction between participants at a distance of less than 2 metres, it is recommended that:
  - The activity occur outdoors, or
  - Modification of the activity or sport occur to keep participants at a safe distance.
- Where sports and activities cannot be modified to maintain distance, limit the number of contacts between different participants. This is done by playing within set cohorts\(^1\) (e.g., mini-leagues, with a fixed number of participants).
  - Mini-leagues should not exceed 50 people. This number includes those participants, officials, coaches and trainers who cannot maintain 2 metres of distance from others at all times. This number does not include parents and spectators.
- Cohorts or mini-leagues should remain together during Stage 2 of Relaunch and only play within the same geographical region (e.g., within a county, town or quadrant of a city).
- It is recommended that mini-leagues be supervised by a responsible person whose role is oversight over maintenance of the group and other public health guidance.

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\(^1\) Cohort is defined as a closed, small group of no more than 50 individuals who participate in the same sport or activity, and remain together for the duration of Stage 2
## Public Health Contact Tracing

- Participants, coaches, instructors, officials or volunteers who become symptomatic during an activity are required to be isolated from others and must return home immediately.
- To support public health contact tracing efforts in the event that an attendee tests positive, operators should consider collecting the names and contact information of attendees.
- 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.
- Information about attendees will only be requested by Alberta Health Services if a potential exposure occurs onsite.
- For businesses/workplaces, this includes staff, workers and volunteers on shift. Where feasible to do so, and particularly for personal services and group events, it should also include patrons/customers/the general public.
- Records should only be kept for two weeks. An organization must make reasonable security arrangements to protect the personal information.
- Any personal information that is collected for COVID-19 contact tracing can only be used for this purpose, unless an individual provides their consent.
- For more information, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner has released Pandemic FAQ: Customer Lists about collecting personal information from customers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- For questions about your obligations under PIPA, please contact the FOIP-PIPA Help Desk by phone at 780-427-5848 or by email at sa.accessandprivacy@gov.ab.ca.
- Organizations may encourage participants to download the ABTraceTogether contact-tracing app to assist public health officials with contact tracing in the event an outbreak should occur.

## Masks

- Participants can wear masks when they are not engaging in intense physical activity.
- Masks should NOT be worn when conducting intense physical activities.
  - Masks and face shields cannot be assured to stay in place during the course of intense activity.
  - There is some evidence to suggest that wearing a mask during high intensity activities could have negative health effects.
  - Mask use during swimming can increase the likelihood of choking or drowning.
COVID-19 INFORMATION

GUIDANCE FOR SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND RECREATION – STAGE 2

Participants, Coaches, Instructors, Staff, Volunteers, Officials, Aides

- Participants should proactively and regularly monitor for symptoms. Symptomatic individuals are prohibited from participating.
- Hand hygiene should occur before and after each activity.
  - Hands should be cleaned before and after using sporting gloves.
  - Gloves should be cleaned after each use.
- To the extent possible, participants should refrain from touching their eyes, nose, mouth and face during activity.
- Practice respiratory etiquette. Participants should refrain from spitting and clearing their nasal passages during activities.
- Limit group celebrations and other customs during activities (e.g., handshakes, high fives, fist bumps, chest bumps) that bring participants with 2 meters or promote contact.
- Water bottles should be labelled with the name of the owner. Do not share water bottles.
- To the extent possible, arrive dressed and ready to participate. There will be limited access to locker rooms to prevent gathering.
- After activities, individuals should minimize time spent in dressing/locker/change rooms and maintain physical distance in lobbies and common spaces.
- Transportation to and from activities should be arranged so that only cohort members, or members from the same household, share rides.

Competition and Mini-League Play

- For those activities where participants are unable to adhere to physical distancing, cohorts of a total of 50 individuals should be formed (mini-league).
  - Mini-leagues should remain together for the duration of Stage 2 of Relaunch.
  - Mini-leagues allow sport teams to return to a safe level of play, and will help to mitigate risk of widespread transmission by limiting the number of athletes that come within close contact.
- The 50 person maximum includes coaches/staff, instructors, participants from multiple teams, officials, and volunteers who cannot maintain 2 metres of distance from others at all times.
- Each mini-league can be comprised of multiple teams, to a maximum of 50 people. Within each mini league, game play can resume between teams.
  - Game play between teams must be limited to teams within the same cohort/mini-league.
  - Teams in different mini-leagues should not play each other.
- At least 2 metres distancing should be maintained between all when off the field of play (e.g., on benches, during intermission).
The 2 metre physical distancing rule can be relaxed for participants from the same household.

### Travel
- For Stage 2 of Relaunch, activities should be restricted to local community opportunities. Participants should not seek sport, physical activity and recreation opportunities in other regions, or out of province.
  - Cross-jurisdictional, or inter-regional, play should not occur at this stage.

### 3.0 Sport and Activity-Specific Considerations

| High intensity Fitness Classes and Studios (Dance, High Intensity Classes) | • There is no scientific evidence establishing a ‘safe’ distance between participants during indoor high intensity activities.  
  | • Both operators and participants should proceed with this type of exercise with caution and should take appropriate measures to reduce risk of exposure and transmission.  
  | • For high-intensity class (e.g., Zumba®, Spin®/cycle class, hot yoga, boot camp), reduce the overall number of participants in classes to ensure that a minimum distance of 3 meters is maintained in all directions of each participant.  
  | o Increase physical distance, or install physical barriers, between the instructor and participants.  
  | • Allow adequate time to thoroughly clean and disinfect equipment between each class.  
  | • Instructors should be assigned and wear microphones to reduce the need for shouting.  
  | o Participants singing along to the music or shout back at the instructor should be discouraged.  
  | • Consider creating cohorts of classmates by assigning specific times for the same participants to partake in classes.  
  | • Mitigate the potential for classmates to gather before and after a class within the facility.  
  | • Ensure group fitness classrooms are well ventilated (e.g., open windows if possible).  
  | • For classes with significant movement (i.e. dance, fighting), it is recommended the program be altered to limit the need to travel within the room. Consider dancing in a designated area or moving the class outdoors. |
### Dance lessons for couples from the same household or cohort
- Participants should be encouraged to bring their own equipment (e.g., mats, blocks).
- If equipment is shared, it should be cleaned and sanitized between users.
- Where fitness activities involve participants in close proximity to the floor, the floor should be cleaned thoroughly between each class.
- Participants should be arranged to maintain 2 metres distance between each other at all times.

### Low Intensity Fitness Classes (e.g. Yoga, Pilates)
- Participants should be encouraged to bring their own equipment (e.g., mats, blocks).
- If equipment is shared, it should be cleaned and sanitized between users.
- Where fitness activities involve participants in close proximity to the floor, the floor should be cleaned thoroughly between each class.
- Participants should be arranged to maintain 2 metres distance between each other at all times.

### Weight Rooms
- Space weight machines at least 2 metres apart.
- Consider greater distances (3 metres) between aerobic fitness equipment where high exertion is common (e.g., treadmills, rowing machines, stationary bikes).
- Designate areas for the use of certain equipment (e.g., stretching areas, kettle bell areas) and for movement (e.g., heavy rope, tire flipping zone) to ensure distancing is maintained.
- Consider using markers on the floor to define designated areas and manage flow of participants.
- If equipment cannot be moved, and positioning will result in participants being within a 2 metre distance, consider blocking off every other piece of equipment or erecting barriers such as acrylic glass between equipment.
- Where spotting is necessary for heavy weight lifting, participants may form small cohorts to limit direct contact with others.

### Indoor Tracks
- Width of track lanes should be considered for physical distancing. Consider limiting the use of every second lane.
- It is suggested that runners travel in the same direction on the track.
- Encourage outdoor running wherever possible.

### Squash and Racquet Ball Courts
- Where not playing with family members, participants should play within a cohort/mini league.
- Encourage participants to bring their own clean equipment when possible.
  - Where equipment is rented, operators should clean and disinfect between uses.
**Gymnastics and Rock Climbing**
- Establish appointments and designate climbing times to ensure physical distancing can be maintained.
- Climbers and gymnasts should be asked to thoroughly wash their hands before and after using shared equipment (e.g., climbing holds, beams, rings).
- Many surfaces in these settings cannot be effectively sanitized. Facilities may consider modifying training to limit the number of surfaces handled by participants.
  - Encourage climbers to clean hands immediately prior to and after use.
- Remove any self-serve chalk bowls and require participants to bring their own chalk.
- Remove mats and other equipment that is torn or in disrepair as these items cannot be effectively sanitized.
- If gear or equipment rental is permitted, ensure it is cleaned and disinfected after being returned.
- Enhance the frequency of cleaning of handholds, rings, bars and other frequently handled surfaces.
- Consult the Alberta Gymnastics Cleaning Guide for specific instructions on how to clean equipment.

**Arena Sport (Figure Skating, Ringette, Hockey)**
- Ice use should be limited to organized activities (e.g., figure skating, hockey, ringette). No more than 50 people can be on the ice/boxes at the same time. This includes referees and coaches, but does not include spectators.

**Multi-use Gymnasiums, Fieldhouses and Community Centres**
- Total number of individuals in a gymnasium setting should not exceed 100.
- If different activities are conducted in the gymnasium setting, cohort groups should be kept separate. Physical barriers (e.g., curtains) are recommended if possible.
  - Participants of different activities should not mix with other activity participants.
- Organized court sports (e.g., volleyball, basketball, badminton, pickle ball) may occur with cohorts of no more than 50 persons.
- Players should follow marked one-way traffic patterns when entering and exiting the gymnasium.
- Gymnasium floors should be thoroughly cleaned at an enhanced frequency.
### Martial Arts, Mixed Martial Arts, Wrestling, Boxing

- For any activities with close and sustained contact between participants, cohorts should be used to the greatest extent possible.
  - For this setting, cohorts should be comprised of those from the same weight class or skill level.
- Remove any mats or equipment that is torn or in disrepair, as these items cannot be properly cleaned and disinfected.

### Personal Training /Coaching/Nutritional Consultations

- These services should continue to be offered virtually, or outdoors, if possible.
- In-person sessions should allow for physical distancing or barriers between the client and trainer. If this is not possible, the trainer should consider wearing a mask.

### Pool and Aquatic Activities (Swimming, Diving)

- Consult the [Guidance for Swimming Pools](#).