

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR FACILITIES FOR SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL FITNESS ACTIVITIES – STEP 3

Last revised: September 24, 2021

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) is currently at Step 3 of the province's [Roadmap to Reopen](#). This document provides guidance for facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities by following [Ontario Regulation 364/20: Rules for Areas at Step 3 and at the Roadmap Exit Step](#) (O. Reg. 364/20) under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Approach to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#).

All businesses and organizations in the County of Simcoe and District of Muskoka must also adhere to the SMDHU's medical officer of health's [letter of instruction](#) (amended September 1, 2021).

NEW: The Ontario government now requires patrons 12 years of age and older to be [fully vaccinated against COVID-19](#) and provide proof of vaccination (i.e., proof of identity and vaccine receipt or effective October 22, 2021 digital vaccine certificate with QR code) to access certain businesses and organizations, with limited exceptions. More information can be found in [O. Reg. 364/20](#) and in the province's [guidance for businesses and organizations](#) and [question and answer](#) resource, on SMDHU's [website](#) and in the proof of vaccination section, below.

The Province of Ontario has identified facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities to include the indoor and outdoor areas operated by gymnasiums, health clubs, arenas, exercise studios, yoga and dance studios, curling clubs, sports and fitness areas in multi-purpose facilities, soccer and other sports domes and other fitness facilities.

INDOOR REQUIREMENTS

Facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities may open for indoor activities if they comply with the following indoor public health measures:

- **NEW:** All patrons 12 years of age and older (including indoor spectators) must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to enter indoor sports and recreational fitness facilities, with limited exceptions. See proof of vaccination section, below for more information.
- The total number of members of the public (not including spectators) permitted to be in the facility at one time must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person in the indoor area of the facility (i.e., one person per 4 square metres) and in any event may not exceed 50 per cent capacity.
 - *50 per cent capacity calculation:* The maximum number of members of the public permitted in the facility is determined by taking 50 per cent of the maximum occupant load of the business or facility, or part of a business or facility, as applicable, as calculated in accordance with Ontario Regulation 213/07 (Fire Code), made under the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997*.
- Spectators are permitted inside the facility, but must comply with the following requirements:
 - In the case of a facility that has a **designated area for indoor spectators**, the capacity cannot exceed 50 per cent of the usual indoor seating capacity, or 1,000 persons, whichever is less.
 - In the case of a facility that **does not have a designated area for indoor spectators**, the number of spectators in the indoor area of the facility at any one time must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person in the indoor area of the facility and in any event may not exceed 50 per cent capacity (calculated by taking 50 per cent of the maximum occupant load of the business or facility, or part of a business or facility, as applicable, as calculated in accordance with Ontario Regulation 213/07 (Fire Code), made under the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997*) or 1,000 persons, whichever is less).
 - Every indoor spectator must wear a mask or [face covering](#) in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin, unless they are entitled to any of the exceptions set out in [O. Reg. 364/20](#). Indoor spectators are permitted to remove a mask or face covering temporarily to consume food or drink, or as may be necessary for the purposes of health and safety.

Additional exceptions to operate inside are provided within [O. Reg. 364/20](#). Please contact [SMDHU](#) to ensure compliance with the Step 3 regulation, including indoor exceptions for day camps or overnight camps, childcare providers, and social services.

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR FACILITIES FOR SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL FITNESS ACTIVITIES – STEP 3

OUTDOOR REQUIREMENTS

Facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities may open for outdoor activities if they comply with the following outdoor public health measures:

- The total number of members of the public (not including spectators) permitted to be at the facility outdoors at one time must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person (i.e., one person per 4 square metres).
- Spectators are permitted outside on the facility property but must comply with the following requirements:
 - In the case of a facility that has a **designated area for outdoor spectators**, the capacity cannot exceed 75 per cent of the usual outdoor seating capacity, or 15,000 persons, whichever is less. Seventy-five per cent capacity is calculated by taking the total square metres of area accessible to the public, dividing that number by 1.33, and rounding the result down to the nearest whole number.
 - In the case of a facility that **does not have a designated area for outdoor spectators**, the number of spectators in the outdoor area of the facility at any one time must not exceed 75 per cent capacity or 5,000 persons, whichever is less.
 - Every outdoor spectator must wear a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin, unless they are entitled to any of the exceptions set out in [O. Reg. 364/20](#) or are seated with only household members, and every household member is seated at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every person outside their household. Further, outdoor spectators are permitted to remove a mask or face covering temporarily to consume food or drink, or as may be necessary for the purposes of health and safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR PERSONAL PHYSICAL FITNESS TRAINERS

Personal physical fitness trainers may operate at indoor and outdoor facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities as follows:

- Any person who is engaged in physical fitness training activities **indoors** must maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person in the establishment except from their caregiver or from household members. It is recommended that any person who is engaged in physical fitness training activities **outdoors** maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person in the establishment except from their caregiver or from household members.
- The total number of patrons permitted to be in personal physical fitness training indoors is limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres from every other person in the indoor area of the facility (i.e., one person per 4 square metres) and in any event may not exceed 50 per cent capacity.
 - *50 per cent capacity calculation:* The maximum number of members of the public permitted in the facility is determined by taking 50 per cent of the maximum occupant load of the business or facility, or part of a business or facility, as applicable, as calculated in accordance with Ontario Regulation 213/07 (Fire Code), made under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997.
- The personal trainer or sports trainer must:
 - prepare a COVID-19 [safety plan](#) in addition to the one prepared by the amenity
 - actively screen patrons prior to each training session by:
 - recording the name and contact information of every member of the public to whom they are providing services,
 - maintaining the records for a period of at least one month, and
 - only disclosing the records to a medical officer of health or a public health inspector under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* on request for a purpose specified in section 2 of that Act or as otherwise required by law.

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR FACILITIES FOR SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL FITNESS ACTIVITIES – STEP 3

RECOMMENDATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL BUSINESSES IN THIS SECTOR

SAFETY PLAN

- A [safety plan](#) must be written by the facility and available on request. In addition, a copy of the safety plan must be posted in a conspicuous location where it can be viewed by staff and patrons.
- Prior to permitting any participants in an organized sports league or event to practise or play the sport at the facility, the facility must ensure that the league or event has prepared and submitted a safety plan to the facility.
- **NEW:** The safety plan shall describe the implementation of public health measures in the location, including but not limited to, screening, proof of vaccination verification process, physical distancing, masks/face coverings, cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects, the wearing of personal protective equipment, and preventing and controlling crowding.
- Additional guidance on how to develop your safety plan can be found [here](#).

PHYSICAL DISTANCING AND CAPACITY

- Team sports or games may be played without physical distancing restrictions.
- Seated spectators (indoors or outdoors) may attend without physical distancing restrictions in spectator areas where seating is in place and related capacity limits are in force. However, see masking provisions for spectators below for indoor and outdoor settings.
- Spectators (indoors or outdoors) in spectator areas without seating must maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person except from their caregiver or from members of the person's household. See masking provisions for spectators above for indoor and outdoor settings.
- The person responsible for the facility, or, where there is no such responsible person, the person holding a permit for the use of the facility must post a sign in a conspicuous location visible to the public that states the capacity limits under which the facility is permitted to operate.
- The person responsible for the facility must not permit patrons to line up or congregate outside of the business or place, or at an outdoor attraction or feature within the facility, unless they are maintaining a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from other groups of persons.
- The person responsible for the facility must not permit patrons to line up inside an indoor part of the facility unless they are maintaining a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from other groups of persons and are wearing a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin, unless they are entitled to any of the exceptions set out in [O. Reg. 364/20](#).
- Post [maximum capacity](#) posters in locations where they can be clearly seen.

SCREENING AND RECORD KEEPING

- All staff must be [actively screened](#) before attending work or their session each day.
- All patrons attending the facility must also be actively screened before attendance. Please see the [instructions](#) from the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health for direction on screening patrons. Patrons who exhibit [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 should be refused entry to the premises.
- Staff and patrons should also conduct a COVID-19 [self-assessment](#) before attending the facility and follow the direction provided. If they have COVID-19 [symptoms](#), they should stay home, seek testing, and [self-isolate](#).
- The Province of Ontario has implemented a website for [all categories of screening](#), including of workers and patrons at fitness facilities.
- Post [screening signs](#) at all entrances.
- It is required that operators and permit holders keep a contact log for ALL patrons attending the facility, including a first and last name, as well as a telephone number (or e-mail address). This log shall be in the custody of the facility/permit holder and not be accessible to the public.
- Maintain log records for at least one month.

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR FACILITIES FOR SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL FITNESS ACTIVITIES – STEP 3

- Only disclose records to a medical officer of health or a public health inspector.
- **NEW:** All patrons 12 years of age and older must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to enter indoor sports and recreational fitness facilities, with limited exceptions, as per [O. Reg. 364/20](#).

NEW: PROOF OF VACCINATION

- Operators of sports and recreational fitness facilities are required to check and verify proof of vaccination (i.e., proof of identity **and** vaccine receipt or effective October 22, 2021, digital vaccine certificate with QR code) of patrons 12 years of age and older, at the point of entry, with limited exceptions. This includes spectators watching indoor sport and recreation activities.
- There may be different requirements for proof of vaccination for different spaces within a facility. Operators will be required to verify proof of full vaccination against COVID-19 at the point of entry of areas of the premises where it is required, for each patron (i.e., hotel, multi-purpose facilities).
- Proof of vaccination is required for patrons to enter an indoor recreational facility located within a hotel unless a [medical exemption](#) applies.
- Patrons 12 years of age and older who are unable to provide proof of vaccination or valid proof of a medical exemption must be refused entry, except when:
 - using the washroom,
 - accessing an outdoor area that can only be accessed through an indoor route,
 - making a retail purchase,
 - placing, picking up or paying for an order,
 - purchasing admission, or
 - where necessary for the purposes of health and safety.
- As per [O. Reg. 364/20.0](#), proof of vaccination is not required where the following exception(s) apply:
 - Patrons under 18 years of age who are entering the indoor areas of facilities used for sports and recreational fitness activities, (including waterparks and personal physical fitness training) **solely for the purpose of actively participating** (training, practices, games, and competitions) in an organized sport (e.g., hockey, tennis).
 - Proof of vaccination (or proof of being entitled to an exception) is not required for workers or volunteers, including coaches and officials.
 - Further exceptions are available for persons with a written document, completed and supplied by a physician (designated as "MD") or registered nurse in the extended class (i.e., designated as "Registered Nurse (Extended Class)", "RN(EC)", "Nurse Practitioner" or "NP") that set out the documented medical reason for not being fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and the effective time period for the medical reason.

Requirements for patrons in indoor sport and recreational fitness facilities

Setting	Activity	Proof of Vaccination
Indoor premises of a facility used for sports and recreational fitness activities	Youth under 18 years of age actively participating in an organized sport, including training, practices, games and competitions. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sports leagues • organized pick-up sports • dance classes • martial arts • swimming classes 	Not required
	Youth under 18 years of age using a gym or other area with exercise equipment or weights.	Required*

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR FACILITIES FOR SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL FITNESS ACTIVITIES – STEP 3

	Youth spectating, including at sporting events	Required*
	Adult (18+) patrons accessing the facility for any purpose , including parents or guardians of youth participating in an organized sport.	Required*

*Unless patron qualifies for an exception

Note: Proof of vaccination (or proof of being entitled to an exception) is not required for workers or volunteers, including coaches and officials.

USE OF MASKS, FACE COVERINGS AND EYE PROTECTION

- Every person indoors for a permitted reason shall wear a mask or [face covering](#) unless exceptions apply as per [O. Reg. 364/20](#).
- Masks can only be removed indoors:
 - to eat and drink, while seated,
 - health and safety reasons.
- Masks are not required outdoors unless physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Staff are required to wear a medical mask and approved eye protection when within 2 metres (6 feet) of someone who is not wearing a mask or face covering in a manner that the mask covers that person's mouth, nose, and chin.

HAND AND RESPIRATORY HYGIENE

- Encourage all visitors to [wash](#) or [sanitize](#) their hands using alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60-90% alcohol content often, especially as they arrive at the facility.
- Encourage visitors to sneeze and cough into their elbow or use single-use tissues followed by hand hygiene. Post [Cover Your Cough](#) posters in locations where they can be clearly seen around the facility.
- Encourage visitors to avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Post handwashing and hand sanitizing posters in high traffic areas.
- Ensure properly stocked, frequently cleaned and disinfected handwash and/or hand sanitizer stations are made available at the entrance and throughout the facility for everyone to wash/sanitize their hands as required.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- In addition to routine cleaning and disinfection, surfaces that are frequently touched with hands should be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition, as well as when visibly dirty.
 - Examples of frequently touched surfaces include, but are not limited to hand contact areas, door handles, switches, tabletops, chairs, sneeze guards, restrooms, change rooms, taps, credit card machines, and baby change tables.
- Equipment (e.g., free weights, weight/fitness machines, etc.) must be cleaned and disinfected between use and as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition. Equipment (e.g., mats, weights, kettle bells, etc.) must not be shared during an activity/class.
- For equipment, use only cleaning and disinfectant products that are intended for the object. Ensure products have a DIN, are not expired, and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Remove equipment that may be difficult to clean and disinfect (e.g., foam rollers, yoga blocks, mats that are absorbent, straps, ropes, etc.).
- Use only disinfectants with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) given and [approved by Health Canada](#). Ensure products are not expired and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- It is recommended to maintain logs of cleaning and disinfection.
- Limit the use of water fountains to be used only to re-fill water bottles, not for individuals to drink directly from them. Ensure they are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR FACILITIES FOR SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL FITNESS ACTIVITIES – STEP 3

- More guidance on cleaning and disinfection is provided by [Government of Canada](#) and [Public Health Ontario](#).
- While the risk of COVID-19 transmission through touching surfaces is low, it does occur. It is important to continue to follow infection control measures to reduce the various ways in which COVID-19 is spread. This includes appropriate cleaning and disinfection as well as proper hand hygiene, masking, physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, and immunization.

LAYOUT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORKOUT AND CLASS AREAS

- Increase spacing between patrons to 2 metres (6 feet) for areas where there are weights/weight machines and exercise/fitness classes to ensure compliance with physical distancing requirements.
- Arrange machines/equipment to maintain at least 2 metres (6 feet) distance from the furthest outside edge of one machine to the outside edge of the next machine in any workout/class area.
- For classes with significant movement, floor or ground markings should be used to designate areas for patrons to remain within. The designated areas must maintain a distance of 2 metres (6 feet) apart (e.g., from edges of floor markings).

CHANGE ROOMS

Change rooms are subject to the following capacity limits:

- The total number of members of the public permitted to be in a change room at one time must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person in the change room (i.e., one person per 4 square metres) and in any event may not exceed 50 per cent capacity.
 - The maximum number of members of the public permitted in the facility is determined by taking 50 per cent of the maximum occupant load of the business or facility, or part of a business or facility, as applicable, as calculated in accordance with Ontario Regulation 213/07 (Fire Code), made under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997.
- Post [maximum capacity](#) posters in locations where they can be clearly seen at change room entrances.

COMMUNITY CENTRES AND MULTI-PURPOSE FACILITIES

Community centres and multi-purpose facilities may open to permit space to be for indoor or outdoor sports or recreational fitness activities. All requirements set out in this guidance document are applicable including but not limited to indoor and outdoor capacity, physical distancing, proof of vaccination and scheduling of cleaning and disinfection in those areas used for indoor or outdoor sports or recreational fitness activities.

TENTS AND CANOPIES

A facility may provide cover for patrons outside according to the following requirements:

- If an outdoor area of the business or place is covered by a roof, canopy, tent, awning or other element, at least two full sides of the entire outdoor area must be open to the outdoors and must not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers: and
- If an outdoor area at the business or place is equipped with a retractable roof and the roof is retracted, at least one full side of the outdoor area must be open to the outdoors and must not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers.

SIGNAGE

NEW: Post signs promoting wearing masks/face coverings, handwashing, physical distancing, proof of vaccination, and capacity limits and make them visible to staff and patrons. Sample signage can be found [here](#).

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR FACILITIES FOR SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL FITNESS ACTIVITIES – STEP 3

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

Further guidance to inform the operation of a facility for sports and recreational fitness activities can be found in SMDHU's [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Day Camps](#) and [COVID-19 Guidance for Recreational Water Facilities](#).

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER AND OUR COMMUNITY

We understand that this is a challenging time, but public health measures like this are needed to limit the spread of COVID-19. We thank you for the service that you provide to the community.

Please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's Health Connection line if you have any questions at 1-877-721-7520, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

While the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit aims to provide relevant and timely information, no guarantee can be given as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided. This guidance is not intended to, nor does it provide legal advice and should not be relied upon or treated as legal advice. Users seeking legal advice should consult with a qualified legal professional. No one should act, or refrain from acting, based solely upon the materials provided in this guidance, any hypertext links or other general information without first seeking appropriate legal or other professional advice. Please visit the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit website regularly for updates and additional guidance.