

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

Last revised: February 23, 2022

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 in Step 3 by following [Ontario Regulation 364/20: Rules for Areas at Step 3](#) (O. Reg. 364/20) under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Approach to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#) to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

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. This guidance document also provides requirements for indoor and outdoor public recreational water facilities including pools, whirlpools (public spas), splash/spray pads, wading pools and water slides.

NEW: Effective **February 17, 2022**, the province has lifted all capacity limits (except for indoor spectator areas) for facilities used for sports and recreational fitness activities, indoor recreational amenities, personal physical fitness trainers as well as for indoor and outdoor public recreational water facilities including pools, whirlpools (public spas), splash/spray pads, wading pools and water slides. More information can be found in the province's [news release](#) and [O. Reg. 364/20](#).

The Ontario government requires **patrons** 12 years and 12 weeks of age and older to be [fully vaccinated against COVID-19](#) and provide proof of vaccination and proof of identity with an original identification document (photocopies of ID and digital versions (stored in phone) are generally not acceptable, but allowed for youth aged 12-17 years) to access certain businesses and organizations, including facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities, with limited exemptions.

All owners, operators, and persons responsible for any indoor areas of facilities used for sports and recreational fitness activities in the County of Simcoe, District of Muskoka and Cities of Barrie and Orillia must also adhere to the SMDHU medical officer of health's [Letter of Instruction](#) (amended November 23, 2021) which sets out specific additional measures to control the spread of COVID-19 including vaccination requirements for each individual, age 12 years and 12 weeks of age and older on the date of entry, at the point of entry, who attends the indoor area of the facility for the purpose of **coaching, teaching, instructing, officiating at organized sports or volunteering in any capacity for any purpose**.

More information on proof of vaccination can be found in [O. Reg. 364/20](#), on the province's [website](#), proof of vaccination [guidance document](#) and [question and answer resource](#), on [SMDHU's website](#), and in the proof of vaccination section, see below.

SAFETY PLAN

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

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INDOOR REQUIREMENTS

- The person responsible for **indoor** facilities used for sports and recreational fitness activities, indoor recreational amenities, personal physical fitness trainers, and pools, whirlpools (public spas), splash/spray pads, wading pools and water slides must ensure the following:
 - **NEW:** The total number of members of the public who are permitted inside the facility is no longer limited to 50 per cent capacity or physical distancing capacity; however, the total number of members of the public who are permitted to be in an **indoor spectator area** of the facility at any one time shall not exceed 50 per cent of the area's usual seating capacity..
- **NEW:** Physical distancing is not required inside the facility except for the following:
 - Physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) is required for all staff.
 - 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](#).
- Sports may be played without physical distancing restrictions.
- Personal physical fitness classes within the facility are not required to physically distance.
- 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.
- [Maximum capacity posters](#) for spectator areas must be posted in a conspicuous location where they can be clearly seen.
- **NEW:** For return to play activities following COVID-19 symptoms, testing, diagnosis and/or exposure please refer to SMDHU's [COVID-19 web page](#) for the most up to date information on when you can return to practice or play.

OUTDOOR REQUIREMENTS

Outdoor sports and recreational fitness facilities may open if they comply with the following conditions:

- 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 members of their own household only, and every member of the household is seated at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every person outside their household.
 - 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.
- The person responsible for the facility must not permit patrons to line up or congregate **outside** of the business or place, 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.
- [Maximum capacity posters](#) for spectator areas must be posted in a conspicuous location where they can be clearly seen.
- **NEW:** For return to play activities following COVID-19 symptoms, testing, diagnosis and/or exposure please refer to SMDHU's [COVID-19 web page](#) for the most up to date information on when you can return to practice or play.

SCREENING

- The person responsible for the facility or permit holder must actively screen participants of indoor and outdoor sports, fitness and exercise classes.
- Every person (e.g., patrons, staff, volunteers) who uses the facility must be [actively screened](#) before entering the facility premises and follow the direction provided.
- Individuals who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 should be refused entry to the premises.
- Post self-screening [signs](#) at all entrances to the business in a location visible to the public that inform individuals on how to screen themselves for COVID-19 before entering.

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- Please see the province's [website](#) for direction on screening employees/workers and visitors.

PROOF OF VACCINATION

- Operators of sport and recreational fitness facilities (including those outdoor areas that have a usual capacity of 20,000 or more) are required to check and verify proof of vaccination and proof of identify with an original identification document (photocopies of ID and digital versions (stored in phone) are generally not acceptable, but allowed for youth aged 12-17 years) of all individuals 12 years and 12 weeks of age and older who are entering into the premises, at the point of entry, with limited exceptions.
 - This includes patrons and individuals who are attending for coaching, teaching, instructing, officiating at organized sports or volunteering in any capacity for any purpose as per [O. Reg. 364/20](#) and SMDHU's [Letter of Instruction](#) to owners, operators, and persons responsible for any indoor areas of facilities used for organized sports and recreational fitness activities in the municipalities of the County of Simcoe, the District of Muskoka, and the Cities of Orillia and Barrie (amended November 23, 2021).
- Individuals are required to use a digital or printed paper copy of the [enhanced vaccine certificate with QR code](#) (vaccine receipts without QR codes are no longer accepted), with limited exemptions for members of nine First Nations communities and visitors from outside of Canada. See the province's [proof of vaccination guidance](#) for more information.
- Operators are required to verify proof of vaccination by using the [Verify Ontario app](#) (visual verification is no longer accepted) in settings where proof of vaccination is required.
- More information about the proof of vaccination requirement can be found in [O. Reg. 364/20](#), on the province's [website](#), in the province's [proof of vaccination guidance](#), in SMDHU's [workplace safety plan, screening and proof of vaccination](#) guidance and on [SMDHU's website](#).

FOOD AND DRINK REQUIREMENTS

- Food and drinks may be sold or served to patrons in an indoor area of the facility and may be sold or served to patrons in restaurants, bars or other food or drink establishments located within the facility.
- For more information see [SMDHU's COVID-19 guidance for food premises](#).

USE OF MASKS, FACE COVERINGS AND EYE PROTECTION

- Every person **indoors** must wear a mask or [face covering](#) in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin, unless exceptions apply as per [O. Reg. 364/20](#).
- It is recommended that all individuals (e.g., staff, volunteers, visitors), wear a [well-fitted](#) high quality 3-layered non-medical mask, medical mask or respirator (i.e., N95s, KN95).
- 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 covers that person's mouth, nose and chin.
- 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](#).
- Every **outdoor spectator** (whether in a designated seating area or not) 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 in the group is seated at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every person outside their household.
- Indoor and 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.
- Post [signage](#) that promotes wearing a mask or face covering at entrances.

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HAND HYGIENE

- Make alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60-90% alcohol content available at the entrances and exits.
- 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.
- Post handwashing and hand sanitizing posters in areas that can be clearly seen. Sample signage can be found [here](#).
- 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.
- Encourage visitors to avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- Washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms, showers must be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.
- In addition to routine daily 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, handrails, 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.
- Remove equipment that may be difficult to clean and disinfect (e.g., foam rollers, yoga blocks, mats that are absorbent, straps, ropes, etc.).
- For equipment, use only cleaning and disinfectant products that are intended for the object.
- Ensure products have a Drug Identification Number (DIN) approved by [Health Canada](#), are not expired, and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- More guidance on cleaning and disinfection including for COVID-19 is provided by [Health 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, respiratory etiquette and immunization.

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, proof of vaccination, screening 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.
 - 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 not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers.

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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:

- Ensure personal trainer staff and patrons adhere to all requirements listed in this guidance document including proof of vaccination requirements for the facility indoors and outdoors including if the facility has an outdoor usual capacity of 20,000 or more persons. See the proof of vaccination section above for more information.
- The personal trainer or sports trainer must:
 - Prepare a COVID-19 [safety plan](#) in addition to the one prepared by the facility.
 - Actively screen patrons prior to each training session.
- **NEW:** Physical distancing is not required for patrons and class participants.

SIGNAGE

Post signs at entry visible to staff and patrons regarding screening, wearing masks/face coverings, handwashing, physical distancing, proof of vaccination and capacity limits for spectator areas. Sample signage can be found [here](#).

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.