

# COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR RECREATIONAL WATER FACILITIES (PUBLIC POOLS, SPLASH PADS, WHIRLPOOLS, WATERPARKS & WADING POOLS) - STEP 3

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This guidance document is for municipalities, hotels, resorts, and persons who operate indoor or outdoor public recreational water facilities. It provides requirements and recommendations to help stop the spread of COVID-19 while operating pools, whirlpools, splash pads, spray pads, wading pools, water slides and float parks. Owners and operators are also responsible for ensuring compliance with the requirements of [Ontario Regulation 565: Public Pools](#) and other applicable legislation, including the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#). Pools, whirlpools, water slide receiving basins and wading pools require an opening inspection before reopening. This document provides additional guidance and clarity for areas at Step 3 of [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](#).

Under Step 3, indoor public recreational water facilities including pools, whirlpools (spa), wading pools, splash pads, spray pads, water slides are permitted to reopen subject to the conditions below and following an opening inspection from a Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) public health inspector.

## PROTECTING MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC, STAFF, AND VOLUNTEERS

### REGULATORY OVERVIEW

All owners and operators of recreational water facilities are responsible for assessing risks associated with their facility and operations and ensure that they mitigate these risks for their employees, volunteers, and attendees. Specific to COVID-19, owners and operators are responsible for implementing measures to reduce the risk of infection among all those who attend their facilities.

The Province of Ontario has implemented Step 3 of the [Roadmap to Reopen](#), the province's three-step plan to safely and gradually lift public health restrictions based on the ongoing progress of provincewide vaccination rates and improvements of key public health and health care indicators. The SMDHU and local municipalities may also implement local public health directions, bylaws, and policies which can exceed the provincial laws and recommendations.

### STATUS OF FACILITY OPERATIONS BY LEVEL OF PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

Step	Facilities that can operate	Capacity Limits
Step 3	<b>INDOOR AND OUTDOOR</b> swimming pools, splash pads, spray pads, wading pools, whirlpools/spa, water slides, sensory deprivation pods, saunas, steam rooms and waterparks may open in any business that is permitted to be open.	<p>The total number of members of the public must be limited in the place of business or facility so that physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) can be maintained between persons not from the same household.</p> <p><b>INDOOR:</b></p> <p>The total number of members of the public permitted to be in the facility at any one time must be limited to 50% of the capacity of the facility.</p> <p><b>Spectators:</b> In a designated area - The total number of spectators at the facility must not exceed 50% of the usual indoor seating capacity or 1000 persons, whichever is less. In a facility that does not have a designated INDOOR area for spectators, the capacity is limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) and in any event may not exceed 50% capacity, or 1000 persons, whichever is less.</p>

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## OUTDOOR:

**Spectators:** The number of spectators at any one time must not exceed 75% of the usual outdoor seating capacity or 15,000 persons, whichever is less. In the case of a recreational water 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% capacity or 5,000 persons, whichever is less.

**Waterparks:** The number of members of the public in the outdoor waterpark area at any one time must not exceed 75% capacity. No member of the public may attend a seated event or activity within the waterpark unless they have made a reservation to do so.

## KEY REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 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 (i.e., posted on a notice board, at a clubhouse, available on the facility's website, etc.).
  - The safety plan shall describe the implementation of public health measures in the location, including but not limited to screening, physical distancing, masks/face coverings, cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects, the wearing of personal protective equipment, and preventing and controlling crowding.
- Before permitting any participants in an organized sports league or event to practise or play the sport at the outdoor recreational facility, the facility must ensure that the league or event has prepared a safety plan.
- Additional guidance on how to develop your plan can be found [here](#).

### CAPACITY LIMITS AND PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- Physical distancing so that at least 2 metres (6 feet) can be maintained between persons that are not from the same household is required. See specific capacity limits listed above.
- Particular attention should be paid to whirlpools, as their smaller size makes physical distancing more challenging.
- While on active duty and not responding to an emergency situation, lifeguards must maintain at least 2 metres distance (6 feet) at all times from patrons and other staff.
- *Swimming lessons:* In-person teaching, and instruction are permitted with at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person in the instructional space, except where necessary for teaching and instruction that cannot be effectively provided if physical distancing is maintained.
- The operator of a pool, splash/spray pad, whirlpool, water slide, waterpark or wading pool may consider a range of other support options that aids in meeting the physical distancing requirements depending on the operating status of their facility, including:
  - Have an attendant (separate from an on-duty lifeguard) monitor the number of bathers permitted in the pool and physical distancing.
  - Encourage pool deck shower usage.
- Washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms or showers capacity may need to be adjusted to allow for physical distancing.
- Persons responsible for the recreational water facility, clubhouse, or waterpark or a permit holder must post a sign in a conspicuous location visible to the public that states the capacity limits for spectators and bathers at any one time.

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- Individuals in line for non-recreational purposes (e.g. at the registration desk) must maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from others and must wear a mask when indoors and when physical distancing is not possible.
- Staff maintain at least 2 metres (6 feet) distance or are separated by an impermeable barrier (e.g., plexiglass) from every other person while they temporarily remove their masks to consume food and beverages on their breaks.
- Post [maximum capacity](#) posters in locations where they can be clearly seen.

## HEALTH SCREENING AND RECORD KEEPING

- Before visiting the recreational water facility, every visitor must complete a [self-assessment](#) for COVID-19 and follow the direction provided. If individuals have COVID-19 [symptoms](#), they should stay home, seek testing and [self-isolate](#).
- Post [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. All staff must be actively screened before attending work each day. Please see the letter of [instruction](#) from the SMDHU's medical officer of health for direction on screening workers. Every student who attends in-person teaching and instruction must be actively screened
- The person responsible for the business or the permit holder for the recreational water facility (not including waterparks) must record the name and contact information of every person who enters the facility for employment, lessons, sports, or personal training (including first name and telephone number/email address).
- Maintain log records for at least one month and only disclose records to a medical officer of health or a public health inspector on request.

## USE OF MASKS, FACE COVERINGS OR EYE PROTECTION

- Masks or [face coverings](#) must be worn when in **indoor** public spaces, such as the spectator viewing areas, public areas of washrooms and change rooms. Additional information is also provided on our [website](#).
- **Outdoor** spectators must wear a mask or face covering unless they are entitled to an exception set out in subsection 2(4) of Schedule 1 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.
- Masks or face coverings should be worn by lifeguards/instructors/staff when on the deck and while on active duty (i.e., on the recreational water facility deck and in other indoor areas of the facility).
- Anyone that works at the facility, including instructors and students, 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 and not engaged with physical activity/respiration.
- Lifeguards stationed in lifeguard towers do not have to wear a mask or face covering if the tower provides a minimum 2 metre (6 feet) distance from patrons and other staff. If the lifeguard tower does not provide the requisite physical distancing of 2 metres, a mask or face covering should be worn. Once the lifeguard leaves the lifeguard tower, a mask or face covering should be worn.

## CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- According to the US CDC, proper operation and maintenance of pools, whirlpools, and water play areas will prevent waterborne transmission of the virus responsible for COVID-19; specifically, disinfection with chlorine and bromine will inactivate the virus. Pool operators who are subject to the requirements of [O. Reg 565](#) made under the Health Promotion and Protection Act are required to maintain proper operation and maintenance of the pool, including water quality requirements in accordance with the regulation.
- 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 also cleaned and disinfected twice per day or as needed.
- Factors that may increase the risk of transmission include inadequate levels of disinfectant, malfunctioning equipment, overcrowding, person-to-person transmission (through contact with droplets), and large organic loading (e.g., feces or vomit).

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- Washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms, showers, similar amenities made available to the public and high touch surfaces (e.g., faucets, handles, doorknobs, handrails, counters, chemistry test kits, keypads, etc.) are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition using a disinfectant with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) according to manufacturers directions for contact times and safe use.
- 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 and proper hand hygiene, masking, physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, and immunization.
- Any equipment that is rented to or provided for the use of members of the public must be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition. For separate equipment using only cleaning and disinfectant products that are intended for the object have a DIN and are not expired.
  - Equipment (e.g., rings, floatation devices) must not be shared during the activity.

## SIGNAGE

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

## OTHER GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

Operators should also refer to guidance from the [Government of Ontario](#), the [Lifesaving Society](#), as well as any local bylaws or other requirements that may also apply. The Government of Ontario guidance supplements, but does not replace, guidance from the SMDHU about Public Pools or the [Public Pool Regulation](#).

## 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 Saturday 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.*