

FAQ's – RECREATIONAL WATER FACILITIES

(PUBLIC POOLS, SPRAY/SPLASH PADS, WHIRLPOOLS, AND WADING POOLS)

What types of recreational water facilities are permitted to open?

All indoor and outdoor swimming pools, splash pads, spray pads, and wading pools were permitted to reopen to the public as part of Stage 2 on June 12, 2020. This included public pools as well as pools situated in community centres, campgrounds, marinas, hotels, motels, condo parks, resorts, and other private facilities. Additionally, whirlpools/spas and water slides are permitted to open as of July 17, 2020 as Simcoe Muskoka enters Stage 3.

What types of recreational water facilities are NOT permitted to open yet?

Water parks, steam rooms, saunas, bath houses are not permitted to reopen in Stage 3.

Are operators required to provide notification to the local public health unit of their intent to operate 14 days prior to opening?

If the pool or whirlpools/spas is subject to the requirements of Ontario Regulation 565 (Public Pools) made under the HPPA, operators of pool or whirlpools/spas are required to notify the local public health unit of their intent to reopen 14 days before reopening following a closure of more than 4 weeks.

Is the direction that Boards of Health inspect all pools and whirlpools prior to opening?

Facilities that require inspection prior to reopening include public pools, whirlpools, and public beaches. Public health units are required to inspect public pools and whirlpools/spas in accordance with the Ontario Public Health Standards and Protocols, which includes any public pools or whirlpools/spas prior to reopening after closure of more than 4 weeks. Once a pool/whirlpool operator is ready, they can give notice to the public health unit and the public health unit can determine when the inspection will occur. The business should open when it is safe to do so. Reopening will be gradual to allow for any necessary precautions and processes, and subject to any local by-laws and other local requirements.

What are the conditions that must be followed to permit the operation of recreational water settings in Stage 3 in accordance with the Reopening Ontario Act, 2020?

The minimum requirements to operate a pool, splash pad, spray pad, whirlpool, wading pools, or water slide can be found in [Ontario Regulation 364](#) under the Reopening Ontario Act, 2020, and within the provincial [guidance for facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities during COVID 19](#). Operators should also refer to the Essential Workplaces Guidance, Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development [industry specific guidance](#), as well as any local by-laws or other requirements that may also apply.

Should disinfection levels be increased in pools?

- According to the US CDC, proper operation and maintenance of pools, hot tubs, whirlpools/spas, 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 Ontario Regulation 565 made under the HPPA are required to maintain proper operation and maintenance of the pool, including water quality requirements in accordance with the regulation.
- Any equipment that is rented to, provided 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.
- Maintaining physical distancing is also recommended along with bather hygiene. The operations of facilities must be in compliance with all other applicable requirements.

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What is the risk of COVID-19 transmission in a public pool?

The transmission of COVID-19 in pool water from swimming is unknown. 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).

Are customers and staff required to wear masks and gloves?

- Effective July 13, 2020, owners or operators of all businesses, organizations and public transit services in Simcoe and Muskoka must have policies in place to restrict people from entering these **indoor** premises if they are not wearing a non-medical mask or face covering. Best efforts shall be made to only allow entry to customers wearing a face covering.
- The [letter](#) to businesses and organizations with this instruction as well as guidance to support implementation are posted to our website, along with a [letter](#) to municipalities. Sample signage can be found [here](#).
- The face covering must be worn inside the business or organization at all times by customers and staff, unless it is reasonably required for customers to temporarily remove the face covering for services provided.
- Face coverings are **not** required by staff that provide lifesaving functions or in situations where face coverings will jeopardize safety of individual or public.
- Face coverings are also **not** required while using indoor public pools, whirlpools, water slides, spray/splash pads, or wading pools.
- Face coverings are required in the public areas of washrooms and change rooms.
- Operators should also refer to the Essential Workplaces Guidance, Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development [industry specific guidance](#), as well as any local by-laws or other requirements that may also apply.

What can recreational water operators do to ensure a facility operates in compliance with physical distancing requirements?

- The pool, splash/spray pad, whirlpool, water slides, or wading pool must comply with the applicable physical distancing requirements. Physical distancing requirements can be met by:
 - Operating with a reduced resting area, capacity or aquatic activity enrolment; or
 - Operating by appointment or timed entry.
- The operator of a pool, splash/spray pad, whirlpool, water slides, or wading pool may consider a range of other supportive options that aids in meeting the physical distancing requirements depending on the operating status of their facility including:
 - Develop an operational plan to comply with provincial and municipal regulations, orders, and guidelines;
 - Designate a log, sign-up sheet and schedule for swimmers;
 - Have an attendant (separate from an on-duty lifeguard) monitor the number of bathers permitted in the pool/whirlpool and physical distancing;
 - Limit bather load to allow 2 metres of physical distance between all swimmers who are not in the same household or social circle;
 - The provincial gathering limits do not apply in the pool unless the pool space is used for a private event. In accordance with [O. Reg 364/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 3](#) and the provincial [guidance for facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities during COVID 19](#), gathering limits of 50 persons indoors and 100 persons outdoors apply to the rented space (the 50 person limit applies to gatherings that include indoor and outdoor spaces). Utilize the posted bather load for recreational water features.

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- Post signage related to physical distancing. Sample signage can be found [here](#).
- Ensure children are accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Does Ontario have legislation that excludes lifeguards from physical distancing requirements?

There is no legislation in Ontario that requires lifeguards to maintain physical distancing while performing their lifeguard duties or while training. Therefore, these types of exemptions are not applicable in Ontario. Lifeguards should ensure physical distancing precautions are followed to the best extent possible.

Will public pool change rooms and showers be available to the public?

Any washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms, showers, or similar amenities made available to the public are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition. Pool deck shower usage is encouraged to enable physical distancing measures. Effective Monday, July 13, 2020, wearing a face covering will be required in the public areas of washrooms and change rooms. Please see [Public Health Guidance for Use of Public Washrooms](#) for important information about requirements for face coverings, as well as other safety and cleaning precautions.

Are aquatic fitness classes exempt from physical distancing requirements?

Aquatic activities such as fitness classes and swim lessons must be in line with physical distancing measures.

Why can I go in a swimming pool but not a water park?

Amusement parks and water parks are not yet permitted to open in Stage 3.

Are spray/splash pad operators required to install a fence to control access by identifying a separate entrance and exit?

Spray/splash pad operators must operate in compliance with Ontario Regulation 565 made under the HPPA and applicable minimum requirements for splash/spray pads in Ontario Regulation 364/20 made under the *Reopening Ontario Act, 2020*.

Updated: August 17, 2020