

# COVID-19 Public Health Guidance: Recreational Water Facilities

Updated September 17, 2021

This document outlines guidance for owners and operators of public swimming pools, spas/whirlpools, wading pools and splash pads to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. This document is for information purposes only, and shall not be construed as legal advice.

## Provincial Roadmap to Reopen at a glance

On July 16, Ontario moved into Step 3 of the [Roadmap to Reopen](#). Residents, organizations, and businesses must abide by the public health measures for Step 3. See [O. Reg. 364/20, Schedules 1, 2 and 3](#), for regulations for Step 3. The Chief Medical Officer of Health and other health experts will continue to monitor the data to determine when it is safe to exit the Roadmap.

**Below are some of the activities that may apply to recreational water facilities for Step 3.** For specific questions about COVID-19 provincial regulations, please contact the **Stop the Spread Business Information Line** at 1-888-444-3659.

### Step 3

- Indoor and outdoor pools, splash pads, spray pads, whirlpools, wading pools, waterparks and water slides open with capacity limit to permit physical distance of 2 metres (six feet)
- Communal steam rooms and saunas open with restrictions

Owners and operators are also responsible for ensuring compliance with the requirements of [Ontario Regulation 565: Public Pools, Consolidated By-law 47-20](#), and other applicable legislation, including the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#).

## Ontario's enhanced COVID-19 vaccine certificate

Starting September 22, 2021, the provincial government will require certain businesses and settings to obtain proof of vaccination from customers/patrons. For more information refer to the [Proof of Vaccination Guidance for Businesses and Organizations](#).

## Instructions for workplaces from Halton Region's Medical Officer of Health

Halton Region's Medical Officer of Health (MOH) issued [amended Instructions to businesses and organizations](#) to help keep staff and customers/patrons safe. The instructions take effect at 12:01 a.m. on **Friday, September 10, 2021**. They combine key existing requirements from the Province and Halton Region Public Health, with some new requirements. **Compliance with these instructions is mandatory.**

## Workplace vaccination

### Workplace vaccination policy

To reduce COVID-19 transmission in the workplace, Halton Region's MOH recommends all local employers have a [workplace COVID-19 vaccination policy](#). For workplaces with more than 100 workers physically present, Halton Region Public Health requires mandatory [COVID-19 safety plans](#) and vaccination policies in place by September 22, 2021.

### Encourage everyone to get a COVID-19 vaccine

Getting vaccinated is one of the ways to stop the spread of COVID-19. Here are some ways you can support vaccination at your workplace:

- Develop a [workplace COVID-19 vaccination policy](#)
- Ensure employees are aware that everyone in Canada is eligible to receive a vaccine for free. Proof of identity is required but a health card is not required for vaccination.
- Share [COVID-19 vaccine resources](#), with staff, available in multiple languages

## Additional COVID-19 public health measures

The following COVID-19 Public Health Measures are recommended by Halton Region Public Health and should be considered in all steps of Ontario's [Roadmap to Reopen](#).

### Limit capacity

- Facilities are required to limit the number of persons to allow two metre (six feet) physical distancing
- Indoor facilities (or parts of the facility in the case of an outdoor facility) are limited to 50% capacity. The capacity limit must be posted on a sign that is visible to the public.
- Condominium and apartment pools for use by building residents are subject to the applicable capacity limits for organized public events and social gatherings (25 people indoors or 100 people outdoors), provided physical distancing of two metres (six feet) can be maintained.

### Spectator Areas

- Indoor and outdoor spectator areas must ensure two metre (six feet) physical distancing.
- Indoor spectator area capacity is 50% and outdoor spectator area capacity is 75% of the seating capacity, with applicable maximum capacities.

### Swimming Lessons

Indoor and outdoor swimming lessons are permitted in Step 3:

- The instructional space must be operated to enable participants to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres (six feet) from every other person in the space, except where necessary for teaching and instruction that cannot be effectively provided if physical distancing is maintained.
- Indoor lessons are limited to 50% capacity.
- Outdoor lessons are limited to 75% capacity.

### Aqua Fitness Classes

Indoor and outdoor aqua fitness classes are permitted with restrictions including two metre (six feet) physical distancing. Indoor classes are limited to 50% capacity.

### Maximize physical distancing

- If feasible or when required, create a booking system that allows patrons to book a specified time slot to attend the facility.
- Encourage patrons to arrive prepared and appropriately attired to begin their activity.
- Use [signage](#) and markings on the floor or walls to encourage physical distancing of at least two metres (six feet), including at areas where patrons may line up.
- Lifeguards who are actively providing safety supervision should not be expected to monitor physical distancing.

### Reduce physical contact

- Where possible, have a parent or caregiver who is in the swimmer's household assist the swimmer in the water, instead of the instructor.
- Limit the use of water fountains to be used only for re-filling water bottles, and not for patrons to drink directly from the spout of the fountain. Encourage patrons to bring their own water bottle and to fill it up at home prior to coming to the facility.

## Wear a mask and use personal protective equipment (PPE)

- [Consolidated By-law 47-20](#) requires individuals to wear a non-medical mask in indoor workplaces and public spaces, unless exempt.
- Workers are recommended to wear a mask when they cannot maintain physical distance of 2 metres (six feet) and cannot be separated by Plexiglass or a barrier.
- PPE (surgical/procedure mask and eye protection i.e. goggles or face shield) is required to be worn by workers when a distance of 2 metres (six feet) cannot be maintained from another person not wearing a mask indoors **and** cannot be separated by Plexiglass or a barrier.
- Lifeguards are not required to wear a mask when seated in an elevated lifeguard station if the station provides physical distancing of at least two metres from patrons.
- Masks can be removed when eating or drinking, but individuals must maintain physical distancing of two metres (six feet) between them.
- Masks are encouraged while engaging in physical activity if it can be done safely, but may be removed if necessary.
- Masks do not replace other important public health measures, such as screening, physical distancing, proper hand hygiene, coughing and sneezing into a tissue or sleeve, and staying home when feeling ill.

## Keep hands and surfaces clean

- Ensure washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms, showers and similar amenities are [cleaned and disinfected](#) as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.
- [Clean and disinfect](#) high-touch surfaces (e.g. drinking water fountains, handles, doorknobs, hand rails).
- Provide adequate hand hygiene supplies including alcohol-based (60-90% alcohol) hand rub stations throughout the facility, including entrances and exits.
- Post [signage](#) to encourage patrons to wash hands frequently for at least 15 seconds with soap and water or use an alcohol-based (60-90% alcohol) hand rub.
- Equipment that is rented to or provided for use by patrons must be cleaned and disinfected frequently.

### Water disinfection

- Proper operation and maintenance of the water filtration and disinfection systems (i.e., with chlorine or bromine) should remove or inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Disinfectant levels must be maintained, where required, under [Ontario Regulation 565 – Public Pools](#).

## Ensure appropriate ventilation

- Ensure heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are maintained and operating as designed.
- Maximize fresh air intake by opening windows or doors, unless doing so poses a safety risk.
- Limit the use of overhead ceiling fans, especially ceiling fans on low ceilings. Avoid the use of pedestal or high-powered fans on/near the floor.

## Additional resources

- Halton Region Public Health:
  - [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Sports and Recreational Fitness](#)
  - [Mental Health Resources and Supports](#)
- Province of Ontario:
  - [Ontario Regulation 364/20: Reopening Ontario](#)
- Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development:
  - [Resources to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace](#)
- Lifesaving Society of Canada:
  - [Guide to Reopening Pools and Waterfronts](#)
- Workplace Safety & Prevention Services
  - [Psychological Safety Resources for Leaders During COVID-19](#)