



Interim Guidance for Indoor Fitness Centers and Gyms Settings (February 26, 2021)

Guidelines for Conducting Business: Any scenario in which many people gather together poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission. All businesses and agencies where groups of people may gather in an enclosed space should create and implement a plan to minimize the opportunity for COVID-19 transmission at their facility. The guidance below will help indoor fitness centers, yoga studios, dance studios, martial arts centers, skating rinks (ice and non-ice), indoor playgrounds, and bowling alleys reduce the spread of COVID-19 in their communities.

In addition to the requirements below, certain businesses **must follow** Closure Periods or Stay at Home Orders, when they are in effect. For more information on any requirements that are currently in effect and how this applies to your business, please visit [Business Closure Periods and Stay at Home Restrictions](#).

This guidance covers the following topics:

- Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure
- Cloth Face Coverings
- Cleaning and Hygiene
- Monitoring for Symptoms
- Protecting Vulnerable Populations
- Combatting Misinformation
- Water and Ventilation Systems
- Additional Resources

Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure

[Social distancing](#) is a key tool we currently have to decrease the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing (“physical distancing”) means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people; do not gather in groups; stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings. Phase 2 includes several requirements and recommendations to support social distancing in spaces where the public may gather.

Fitness centers and gyms are required to:

- Limit occupancy in indoor settings to 50% Emergency Maximum Occupancy. This is the lowest number produced by applying the following two tests:
 - Limit the number of customers in the facility to 50% of stated fire capacity (or, for spaces without a stated fire capacity, no more than 12 customers for every

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1,000 square feet of the location's total square footage including the parts of the location that are not accessible to customers or guests).

- Limit the number of people in any given room of the facility so that everyone can stay 6 feet apart.
 - Limit the number of customers in the outdoor area to 12 customers for every 1,000 square feet.
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- Limit the number of customers in the outdoor area to 50% of stated fire capacity or 12 customers for every 1,000 square feet.
 - For games or events with spectators, please follow the spectator capacity requirements outlined in the Interim Guidance for Small and Medium Size Venues for Live Performance
 - Post the reduced "Emergency Maximum Capacity" in a conspicuous place. [Sign templates](#) are available in English and Spanish on NC DHHS COVID-19 response site.
 - Post signage at the main entrance that reminds people to stay six feet apart.
 - [NC DHHS Know Your Ws](#) provides [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Combined English and Spanish](#) versions of the "Wait" flyer.
 - For activities involving people spread out among fixed equipment or lanes, tape off or move the equipment, or restrict access to lanes, so that the people conducting the exercise activity are at least six (6) feet apart.
 - For group classes or group activities, ensure that all people are spaced at least 6 feet apart. Instructors may come within 6 feet of customers for brief periods of time (less than 15 minutes).
 - Mark 6 feet of spacing in lines at point of sale and in other high-traffic areas for customers.
 - For people waiting to take their turn in the activity, space out any seating so that people can be socially distanced and stay 6 feet from each other.
 - Follow the [DHHS Interim Guidance for Restaurants](#) for reopening restaurants or concession stands.

It is recommended that fitness centers and gyms:

- Encourage outdoor activity and classes if feasible.
- Close all areas of the fitness center or gym where social distancing cannot be maintained, such as saunas, steam rooms, and whirlpools.
- Utilize self-check-in or place barrier/partition between front desk staff and members.
- When sinks or showers are not 6 feet apart, consider limiting use to every other sink or shower so individuals can maintain social distance while using.
- Close all common seating areas, lounge areas, and other areas that promote individuals gathering in groups.
- Personal training services and fitness coaching should practice social distancing to the extent possible. When these services require physical contact between staff and participant, hands must be washed immediately prior to and following the service and cloth face coverings should be worn by both parties, and face to face contact should be minimal.
- Discontinue use of drinking directly from water fountains and provide disposable cups or labeled water bottles for individuals when using any water fountains. Touchless water filling stations may be used.
- Encourage people to bring their own skates, bowling balls, or bowling shoes, as appropriate.

Cloth Face Coverings

There is growing evidence that wearing a face covering can help reduce the spread of COVID-19, especially because people may be infected with the virus and not know it.

Fitness centers and gyms are **required** to:

- Have all customers and workers within the establishment wear a face covering unless they state an exception applies. When outdoors, workers and customers must wear a face covering when they are within 6ft of someone who does not reside in their household.
- Visit NC DHHS [COVID-19 response site](#) for more information about the face covering [guidance](#) and access sign templates that are available in English and Spanish.

It is recommended that fitness centers and gyms:

- Provide cloth face coverings for employees and ask them to properly launder using hot water and a high heat dryer between uses.
- Provide disposable face coverings to customers to wear while in the establishment.

Cleaning and Hygiene

Washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer reduces the spread of transmission.

Fitness centers and gyms are **required** to:

- Promote frequent use of hand washing and hand sanitizer for staff and individuals. Require handwashing of staff immediately upon reporting to work, after contact with individuals, after performing cleaning and disinfecting activities, and frequently throughout the day.
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) at the entrance, and any other areas throughout fitness center or gym as needed.
- Perform ongoing and routine environmental cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas (e.g., doors, doorknobs, rails, lockers, dressing areas, front counter) with an [EPA approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2](#) (the virus that causes COVID-19), and increasing disinfection during peak times or high customer density times.
- All shared fitness equipment- including skates, bowling balls and shoes-must be disinfected between users, with EPA approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2 provided for use and adequate contact time allowed for disinfectant as stated by manufacturer. If equipment is to be cleaned by the individual, instructions on how to properly disinfect and appropriate contact time for disinfectant must be provided.
- Systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol) and assure soap and hand drying materials are available at all sinks.

It is recommended that fitness centers and gyms:

- Provide tissues for proper cough and sneeze hygiene.
- If towel service is provided, soiled towels must be kept in closed containers, handled minimally by employees, and employees must wash hands immediately after handling soiled linens. Towels should be washed and dried on high heat.
- Provide materials for members to wipe and disinfect equipment before and after exercise at each location.

- Remove soft surfaces and items difficult to disinfect in lobbies and other areas to the extent possible.

Monitoring for Symptoms

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Conducting regular screening for symptoms can help reduce exposure. Staff should be encouraged to self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath.

If they develop symptoms, they should notify their supervisor and stay home. More information on [how to monitor for symptoms](#) is available from the CDC.

Fitness centers and gyms are **required** to:

- Have a plan in place for immediately removing employees from work if symptoms develop. Employees who have symptoms when they arrive at work or become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home.
- Conduct daily [symptom](#) screening (standard interview questionnaire [English](#) | [Spanish](#)) of employees at entrance to workplace with immediately sending symptomatic workers home to [isolate](#).
- Post signage at the main entrance requesting that people who have been symptomatic with fever and/or cough not enter, such as [Know Your Ws/Stop if You Have Symptoms](#) flyers (English - [Color](#), [Black & White](#); Spanish - [Color](#), [Black & White](#)).

It is recommended that fitness centers and gyms:

- Establish and enforce sick leave policies to prevent the spread of disease, including:
 - o Enforcing employees staying home if sick.
 - o Encouraging liberal use of sick leave policy.
 - o Expanding paid leave policies to allow employees to stay home when sick.
- [Per CDC guidelines](#), if an employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is presumed positive by a medical professional due to symptoms, the employee should be excluded from work until:
 - o No fever for at least 24 hours since recovery (without the use of fever-reducing medicine AND
 - o Other symptoms have improved (e.g., coughing, shortness of breath) AND
 - o At least 10 days have passed since first symptoms

***A test-based strategy is no longer recommended to discontinue isolation or precautions and employers should not require documentation of a negative test before allowing a worker to return.**
- [Per CDC guidelines](#), if an employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 but does not have symptoms, they should remain out of work until 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test, assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test.
- Require symptomatic employees to wear masks until leaving the facility. Cleaning and disinfecting procedure should be implemented by designated personnel following [CDC guidelines](#) once sick employee leaves.
- Provide employees with information on help lines to access information or other support in reference to COVID-19, e.g. 211 and Hope4NC Helpline (1-855-587-3463)

Protecting Vulnerable Populations

Information on who is at higher risk for severe disease is available from the [CDC](#) and [NCDHHS](#).

It is recommended that fitness centers and gyms:

- Designate a specific time for persons at higher risk to access the fitness center without the general population (such as early morning, or late afternoon).
- Enable staff to self-identify as high risk for severe disease and reassign work to minimize their contact with customers and other employees.

Combatting Misinformation

Help ensure that the information your staff is getting is coming directly from reliable resources. Use resources from a trusted source like the [CDC](#) or [NCDHHS](#) to promote behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Fitness centers and gyms are **required** to:

- Make information available to staff about COVID-19 prevention and mitigation strategies, using methods like videos, webinars, or printed materials like FAQs. Some reliable sources include [NC DHHS COVID-19](#), [Know Your W's: Wear, Wait, Wash](#), [NC DHHS COVID-19 Latest Updates](#), [NC DHHS COVID-19 Materials & Resources](#)

It is recommended that fitness centers and gyms:

- Put up signs and posters, such as those found [Know Your Ws: Wear, Wait, Wash](#) and those found [Social Media Toolkit for COVID-19](#).

Water and Ventilation Systems

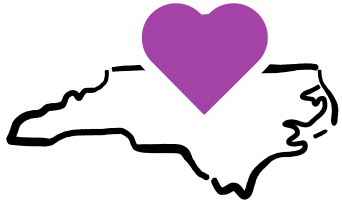
Reduced use of water and ventilations systems can pose their own health hazards. There is increased for Legionella and other from stagnant or standing water.

It is recommended that:

- Before reopening, follow the CDC's [Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown](#) or Reduced Operation to minimize the risk of diseases associated with water.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety or health risk to people using the facility. Maintain relative humidity at 40 to 60 percent.
 - For assistance with ventilation recommendations, please consult an HVAC professional and see [ASHRAE](#) updates for more information.
- Use portable High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filtration units.
- If fans, such as pedestal fans or hard-mounted fans are used, take steps to minimize air from fans blowing from one person directly at another individual. If fans are disabled or removed, employees and members should remain aware of, and take steps to prevent, [heat-related illness](#).

Additional Resources

- NC DHHS: [North Carolina COVID-19](#)
- CDC: [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- CDC: [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)
- CDC: [Reopening Guidance](#)
- EPA: [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#)
- FDA: [Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- HHS/OSHA: [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)



#StayStrongNC

**Staying apart brings us together.
Protect your family and neighbors.**

Learn more at nc.gov/covid19.



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