

# COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR FACILITIES FOR SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL FITNESS ACTIVITIES (INCLUDING RECREATIONAL WATER FACILITIES) – STEP 2

Last revised: January 7, 2022

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) is currently in a modified Step 2 of the province's [Roadmap to Reopen](#). This document provides guidance for facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities in Step 2 by following [Ontario Regulation 263/20: Rules for Areas in Step 2](#) (O. Reg. 263/20) 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. Operators of indoor playgrounds must also adhere to the requirements contained in this guidance document. This guidance document also provides requirements for indoor and outdoor public recreational water facilities including pools, whirlpools (public spas), splash/spray pads, wading pools, waterparks and water slides.

Effective **January 5, 2022**, the province has closed **indoor** sports and recreational fitness facilities including gyms, except for athletes training for the Olympics and Paralympics and select professional and elite amateur sport leagues. **Outdoor** facilities are permitted to operate but with the number of spectators not to exceed 50 per cent occupancy and other requirements. More information can be found in the province's [news release](#) and [O. Reg. 263/20](#).

Effective **January 5, 2022**, the province has closed the following **indoor** recreational water facilities: pools, whirlpools (public spas), splash/spray pads, wading pools, water slides and waterparks.

All businesses and organizations 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 inside workplaces and public places.

The Ontario government requires **patrons** 12 years and 12 weeks of age and older (to allow children a grace period of 12 weeks from their 12<sup>th</sup> birthday) to be [fully vaccinated against COVID-19](#) and provide proof of vaccination and proof of identity with an original identification document (copies are not acceptable) to access certain businesses and organizations, including facilities for sports and recreational fitness activities, with limited exemptions.

More information can be found in [O. Reg. 263/20](#), on the province's [website](#), on [SMDHU's website](#), and in the proof of vaccination section, 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), record keeping, physical distancing, masks or face coverings, cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects, the wearing of personal protective equipment, and preventing and controlling crowds.
- 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](#).

## INDOOR REQUIREMENTS

- Effective **January 5, 2022**, indoor sports and recreational fitness facilities are **closed** including gyms and indoor recreational water facilities (i.e., pools, whirlpools (public spas), splash/spray pads, wading pools, water slides and waterparks), except for athletes training for the Olympics and Paralympics and select professional and elite amateur sport leagues.
  - Indoor sports and recreational classes are not permitted.
  - More information can be found in the province's [news release](#) and [O. Reg. 263/20](#).

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- Limited indoor access is permitted, including licensed childcare, mental health and addictions support services, social services or the sole use of the facility by persons with a disability, physical therapy and support persons or service animals.
- Day camps are not permitted.

## OUTDOOR REQUIREMENTS

Effective **January 5, 2022**, outdoor sports and recreational fitness facilities may open if they comply with the following conditions:

- The number of spectators at the facility at any one time must not exceed 50 per cent of the usual seating capacity, and for a facility that does not have an area designated for spectator seating, the area is to be limited to 50 per cent capacity (determined by taking the total square metres of the area, dividing that number by 8 and rounding the result down to the nearest whole number).
- 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. 263/20](#) 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.
- The person responsible for the facility must ensure that members of the public are to maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person (see capacity section below).
- The person responsible for the facility or permit holder must record the name and contact information of every member of the public who attends (see screening and record keeping section below).
- Sports, fitness and exercise classes are permitted with the following conditions:
  - Physical distancing at 2 metres (6 feet) must be adhered to,
  - The person responsible for the facility or permit holder must actively screen participants (see screening and record-keeping section below),
  - Organized sports leagues must submit a safety plan to the facility (see safety plan section below).
- In-person outdoor teaching and instruction are permitted with the following conditions:
  - The students must maintain a physical distance of 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 total number of students permitted to be in each instructional space at any one time must be limited to the number of persons who can maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person in the space where the instruction is provided.

## CAPACITY LIMITS AND PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- Effective **January 5, 2022**, **outdoor** sports and recreational fitness facilities may open if the person responsible for the facility must ensure that members of the public are to maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person.
- Effective **January 5, 2022**, **indoor** sports and recreational fitness facilities may open for **permitted uses only** (including licensed childcare, mental health and addictions support services, and social services) and must comply with the following capacity conditions:
  - The person responsible for the facility must ensure that members of the public are to maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person and cannot exceed 50 per cent capacity.
  - 50 per cent capacity is determined by taking 50 per cent of the maximum occupant load of the business or facility, or part of a business or facility, as applicable, as calculated in accordance with Ontario Regulation 213/07 (Fire Code), made under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997.
- The person responsible for the facility must not permit patrons to line up or congregate **outside** the facility unless they are maintaining a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from other groups of persons.
- 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. 263/20](#).

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## SCREENING AND RECORD KEEPING

- 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.
- The person responsible for the business or the permit holder for the facility must record the full name (i.e., first, and last name) and contact information (i.e., telephone number and/or email address) of every person who enters any area of the facility.
- Records must be maintained for at least 30 days and only disclosed to a medical officer of health or inspector on request.
- Please see the province's [website](#) for direction on screening employees/workers and visitors.

## PROOF OF VACCINATION

- Proof of vaccination is required for all individuals 12 years and 12 weeks of age and older (to allow children a grace period of 12 weeks from their 12<sup>th</sup> birthday) in outdoor areas that have a usual capacity of 20,000 or more used for sports and recreational fitness activities, including waterparks, personal physical fitness trainers, and the outdoor areas of facilities where spectators watch events.
- Proof of vaccination for all individuals 12 years and 12 weeks of age and older is *not* required in outdoor areas with a usual capacity of less than 20,000.
- 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 (copies are not acceptable) of all individuals 12 years and 12 weeks of age and older who are entering the premises (e.g., athletes, students, spectators, coaches, officials, and volunteers), at the point of entry, with limited exceptions, as per [O. Reg. 263/20](#).
- Effective **January 4, 2022**, individuals are required to use a digital or printed paper copy of the [enhanced vaccine certificate with QR code](#) (vaccine receipts will no longer be accepted). Operators are required to verify proof of vaccination by using the [Verify Ontario app](#) (visual verification is longer be accepted) in settings where proof of vaccination is required.
- All individuals who are required to provide proof of vaccination and are unable to provide proof of vaccination or valid proof of a medical exemption must be refused entry to the facility, with limited exceptions as per section 2.2(6) of Schedule 1 of O. Reg. 263/20.
  - Until **January 9, 2022**, medical exemptions are permitted for persons with a written document, completed and supplied by a physician (designated as “MD”) or registered nurse in the extended class (i.e., designated as “Registered Nurse (Extended Class)”, “RN(EC)”, “Nurse Practitioner” or “NP”) that set out:
    - the documented medical reason for not being fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and
    - the effective time period for the medical reason.
- Effective **January 10, 2022**, organizations and businesses that are under the provincial proof-of-vaccination system are advised not to accept physician notes as medical exemptions. Those with eligible medical exemptions will receive an enhanced COVID-19 vaccine certificate with QR code that can be verified using the [Verify Ontario app](#). Requiring a vaccine certificate with QR code will strengthen the verification process for medical exemptions.
- Please note, operational exceptions are afforded to licensed childcare providers, mental health support services, addictions support services and social services. More information can be found in [O. Reg. 263/20](#). Please contact SMDHU to ensure compliance with the Step 2 regulation.
- More information about the proof of vaccination requirement can be found in [O. Reg. 263/20](#), on the province's [website](#), or [SMDHU's website](#).

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## 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. 263/20](#).
- 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 **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. 263/20](#) 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.
- 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).
- Post [signage](#) that promotes wearing a mask or face covering at entrances.

## HAND AND RESPIRATORY 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 sneeze and cough into their elbow or use single-use tissues followed by hand hygiene. Post [Cover Your Cough](#) posters in locations where they can be clearly seen around the facility.
- Encourage visitors to avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.

## CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- 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.
- For equipment, use only cleaning and disinfectant products that are intended for the object. Ensure products have a Drug Identification Number (DIN), are not expired, and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Remove equipment that may be difficult to clean and disinfect (e.g., foam rollers, yoga blocks, mats that are absorbent, straps, ropes, etc.).
- Use only disinfectants with a DIN and [approved by Health Canada](#).
- It is recommended to maintain logs of cleaning and disinfection.
- 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 cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.
- 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.



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## COMMUNITY CENTRES AND MULTI-PURPOSE FACILITIES

Community centres and multi-purpose facilities must cease indoor sports or recreational fitness activities subject to any exceptions provided in [O. Reg. 263/20](#) and in this guidance document.

Outdoor sports or recreational fitness activities are permitted subject to [O. Reg. 263/20](#) and the directions contained in this guidance document. All requirements set out in this guidance document are applicable including but not limited to, proof of vaccination 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 must not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR PERSONAL PHYSICAL FITNESS TRAINERS

Personal physical fitness trainers may operate outside only at 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 capacity limits for any outdoor area and proof of vaccination requirements for the facility if the facility has a 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 and:
    - record the name and contact information of every member of the public to whom they are providing services,
    - maintain the records for a period of at least one month,
    - only disclose the records to a medical officer of health or inspector under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* on request for a purpose specified in section 2 of that Act or as otherwise required by law.
- The personal trainer or sports trainer must limit patrons to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person in the outdoor space.

## 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. 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.

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*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.*