

COVID-19 Guidance for Recreational Water Facilities

Since recreational water facilities have been closed for more than four weeks, under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* (HPPA) [the Ontario Pools Regulation 565](#) requires owners/operators to notify Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health about their intention to re-open their recreational water facility **at least 14 days prior to opening**.

Notification can be done online using our [recreational water opening notification form](#) (printable notification form [here](#)). This will allow time for Public Health inspectors to review and plan inspections. The pool opening notification requires an anticipated date of opening; and it is advised to submit your forms early due to the high volume of re-opening requests.

Public Health inspectors will ensure compliance with the [Ontario Pools Regulation 565](#) and COVID-19 prevention measures. Inspection results are provided on [Check Before you Choose](#).

The following provides information on the re-opening of all **indoor and outdoor swimming pools, spas/hot tubs, splash pads and wading pools**. Steam rooms, saunas and bathhouses must remain closed at this time.

To keep up-to-date with the re-opening process, please visit the [Provincial Emergency Orders and Closures](#). The following guidelines are also set by the Province of Ontario:

- As of July 17, 2020, as part of the [Stage 3 reopening's](#), public spas/hot tubs and water slides are permitted to reopen, along with public indoor and outdoor pools, splash pads and wading pools permitted to reopen in [Stage 2](#), ensuring the following requirements are met:
 - (a) 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; and
 - (b) 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
- Waterparks, steam rooms, saunas and bathhouses are not yet considered safe to reopen and must remain closed at this time
- Aquatic activities such as fitness classes and swimming lessons must be in line with physical distancing measures. For example, only other members of your social circle can assist swimmers with physical contact.

Recommendations

Re-opening recreational water spaces, or any business during these unprecedented times, does not go without some risk. Owners/operators of **indoor and outdoor swimming pools, spas/hot tubs, splash pads, and diving pools** and other recreational water spaces must decide whether opening under these constraints, and with these risks, is technically, logistically, and financially feasible.

General cleaning and disinfection

- COVID-19 is largely transmitted through respiratory droplets that can spread up to 2 metres or 6 feet. There is currently no evidence that the virus is transmitted through water, but the risk of transmission remains present at any place of work, public space, or recreational facility.
- Follow standard protocols for routine cleaning and disinfection. In addition to routine cleaning, high touch surfaces like doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, counters, and handrails should be cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily.
- Equipment rented or loaned must be disinfected or quarantined appropriately between uses.
- It is recommended that water fountains be made inaccessible at this time; or mouthpieces should be cleaned and disinfected frequently, and according to manufacturer's recommendations.
- Disinfectant solution should have an 8-digit drug identification number (DIN) [approved by Health Canada](#), deemed effective against COVID-19 and viruses.
- Disinfectants are meant to be used to clean surfaces. Never use these products on skin or internally (e.g., by swallowing or injecting these products) as this could cause serious harm. Ensure there is a process in place to verify appropriate concentration levels if the disinfectant is not already pre-mixed. Always read and follow manufacturers' instructions for safe use (e.g., wear gloves and use in well-ventilated area).

For more information review [Cleaning and Disinfection in Public Settings](#).

Staff and Visitor Safety

- Ensure [signage](#) about [COVID-19 symptoms](#) is posted near entrances/visible areas of the aquatic recreational space to help the public and staff identify whether they have [COVID-19 symptoms](#).
- Both the public and staff should be reminded about staying home if feeling unwell.

- Staff and visitors must practice physical distancing by staying at least 2 metres away from others.
 - Staff and visitors should be advised to practice good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Good hand hygiene includes washing hands frequently with warm, soapy water and/or sanitizing hands frequently with sanitizer that has at least 60 per cent alcohol content. Good respiratory etiquette includes coughing or sneezing into a bent elbow or disposable tissue. Consider posting our [How to wash your hands with soap and water](#) sign in washrooms or other common areas.
- It is recommended that indoor recreational water facilities have hand sanitizing stations at the entrance and exits.
- Staff should be made aware of the Ministry of Health's [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) and asked to use it prior to coming into work to identify any symptoms/whether they need to self-isolate at home. Direct staff to stay home if they are sick. If they become unwell while at work, they should go home immediately.

Physical Distancing

- For all **indoor and outdoor swimming pools, spas/hot tubs, splash pads, wading pools** and other recreational water spaces, efforts should be made to limit attendance to ensure that physical distance of at least 2 metres between individuals is always maintained. Distancing requirements may be subject to change.
- To facilitate physical distancing, limit the number of individuals using the space at once. For example, this could include:
 - Permitting less individuals than the maximum bather load or number of individuals that would normally be allowed in the space. Larger or busier spaces may need supervision to monitor and ensure physical distancing as much as possible.
 - Reducing resting areas and pool capacity.
 - Limiting and distancing pool-side seating.
 - Timed entry (e.g., appointment only).
 - [Screening sign with symptom list](#)
 - [How to wash your hands with soap and water](#)

Face Coverings

A face covering must be worn inside the establishment at all times, unless it is reasonably required to temporarily remove it for services provided by the establishment including:

- While eating or drinking;
- While exercising or participating in an activity that requires physical exertion;
- While participating in an activity where a face covering may become wet.

Applicable laws and regulations

- Owners/operators must continue to comply with all applicable legislation, including:
 - [Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act](#)
 - [Health Protection and Promotion Act](#)
 - [Ontario Regulation 565, Public Pools](#)
 - [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)
 - All other related laws and regulations

Additional Resources

The following is a list of other helpful resources and websites to consider for re-opening:

- [Guide to Reopening Pools and Waterfronts](#) (Lifesaving Society)
- [COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) (Ministry of Health)
- [COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms](#) (Ministry of Health)
- [List of DIN-registered disinfectants](#) (Health Canada)
- [Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#) (Public Health Ontario)
- [Coronavirus Disease \(Covid-19\) Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces](#) (Public Health Agency of Canada)

Adapted with permission from Region of Waterloo Public Health.

Frequently Asked Questions (Ministry of Health Guidance)

What types of recreational water facilities are permitted to open?

All indoor and outdoor swimming pools, spas/hot tubs, splash pads, spray pads, wading Pools and water slides in the regions identified for [Stage 3 Reopening](#) as of July 17, 2020 may open to the public with restrictions. Water parks, steam rooms, saunas and bathhouses are not yet permitted to reopen. This includes public pools as well as pools situated in community centres, campgrounds, marinas, hotels, motels, condo parks, resorts, and other private facilities.

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

Waterparks, steam rooms, saunas and bathhouses are not be 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 is subject to the requirements of [Ontario Regulation 565](#), Public Pools made under the HPPA, operators of pools 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.

What are the conditions that must be followed to permit the operation of pools in Stage 2 and Stage 3 in accordance with the emergency order?

The minimum requirements to operate pools, spas/hot tubs, splash pads, spray pads and wading pools can be found under section 19 within the emergency order, [Ontario Regulation 263/20 – Stage 2 Closures](#), [Ontario Regulation 364/20 – Rules for Areas in Stage 3](#), as well as maintaining compliance with the requirements of [Ontario Regulation 565, Public Pools](#).

Should disinfection levels be increased in pools?

According to the US CDC, proper operation and maintenance of pools, hot tubs, 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.

Maintaining physical distancing is also recommended along with bather hygiene. The operations of facilities must be in compliance with all other applicable requirements.

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

The transmission of COVID-19 in pool water and associated infectivity via 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).

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

The pool, splash pad, spray pad or wading pool must comply with the applicable physical distancing requirements 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 pad, spray pad 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 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 and physical distancing;
- Limit bather load to allow 2 metres of physical distance between all swimmers who are not in the same household or ten-person social circle;
- Consider and/or adjust activities permitted in the pool (i.e., lane swim, remove access to high-contact aquatic features, including slides, diving boards and climbing structures, with the exception of ladders).
- Post [signage related to physical distancing](#)
- 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 locker room, change room or shower that is used in conjunction with a pool, splash pad, spray pad or wading pool may be open for that purpose and must be sanitized and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary environment.

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 are swimming pools permitted to reopen but not waterparks?

Workplaces, community spaces and events that pose the highest risk, such as amusement parks and waterparks will reopen at a later time. This is in keeping with Ontario's gradual, incremental approach to ensure the safe reopening of the province.

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 263/20 – Stage 2 Closures](#) and [Ontario Regulation 364/20 – Rules for Areas in Stage 3](#), made under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*.