

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Guideline for Swimming Pools

May 5, 2020



Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

Guideline for Swimming Pools

This document provides guidance for preventing transmission of COVID-19 to operators of swimming pools. It is based upon current knowledge and it should be understood that guidance is subject to change as new data becomes available and new developments arise with this new virus; furthermore, unique situations may require some discretion in adjusting these guidelines which are meant to be supportive, not prescriptive.

WHAT is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory infection caused by a newly identified virus. The infection has symptoms similar to other respiratory illnesses, including the flu and common cold: cough, sneezing, fever, sore throat and difficulty breathing. Other symptoms can include fatigue, muscle aches, diarrhea, headache or lost sense of smell. While most people infected with COVID-19 experience only mild illness, severe illness can occur in some people, especially in those with weaker immune systems, the elderly and those with chronic medical conditions.

HOW is COVID-19 Spread?

COVID-19 is spread through liquid droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus in these droplets can enter through the eyes, nose or mouth of another person if they are in close contact with the person who coughed or sneezed. COVID-19 is not transmitted through particles in the air and is not something that can enter the body through the skin.

WHERE can I get more Information about COVID-19?

The province of British Columbia has created a phone service to provide non-medical information about COVID-19 which is available from 7:30 a.m. - 8 p.m. at 1-888-COVID19 (1-888-268-4319) or via text message at 604-630-0300.

More information on COVID-19 can also be found online:

Vancouver Coastal Health <http://www.vch.ca/covid-19>

BC Centre for Disease Control <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>

CAN swimming pools operate during COVID-19?

At this time, pools have not been ordered to close. Swimming and other water-related activities are excellent ways to get the physical activity needed for a healthy life. The use of swimming pools is considered a low risk activity as long as the pool is operated and properly maintained.

Can the COVID-19 virus spread through pool water?

There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to humans through the pool water. Proper operation, maintenance, and disinfection (e.g., with chlorine and bromine) of pools and hot tubs spas, should inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19. Appropriate care should be taken both in and outside the pool, to protect yourself and others.

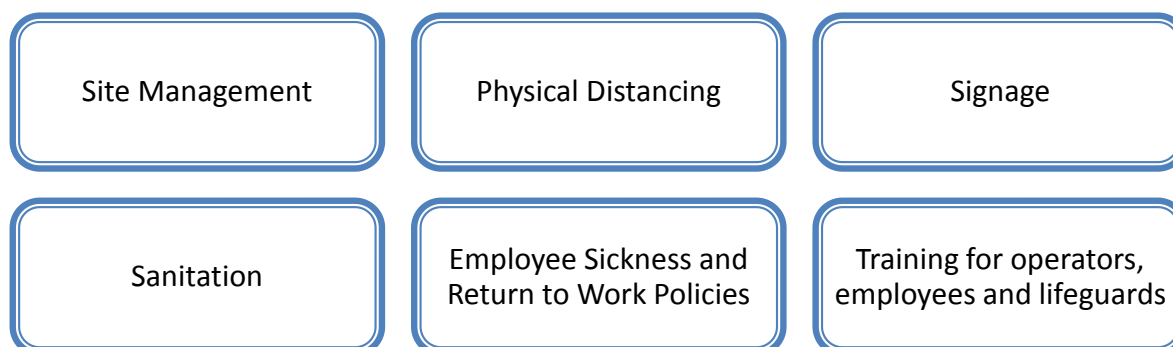
How can Pool Operators protect their employees and the public from COVID-19?

Before opening their facilities to the public, pool operators will need to develop their own policies and procedures to minimize the risk COVID-19 poses to the health of its employees, and to the public.

The information presented in this guideline informs a number of potential actions for reducing the risk of transmission. However, each recreational area must be assessed for transmission risks such that the appropriate combination of measures can be implemented.

Facilities should designate a person responsible for the pool during all operational hours. If staffing or equipment shortages create an environment where the goals listed in this document cannot be reasonably achieved, operators should consider closing the pool. Reliable and consistent oversight on the implementation of new policies and procedures must be in place to prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

When developing COVID-19 mitigation policies and procedures, consult the enclosed tip sheets and note the goals and considerations for each of the following areas of concern:



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Site Management

Goal: Modify daily operations and the physical environment to minimize the potential for COVID-19 to spread in the pool area.

Considerations:

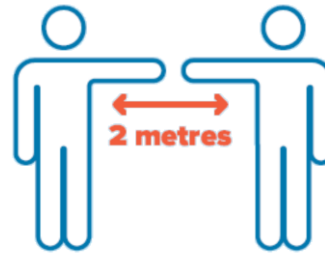
- Provide a supply of hand sanitizer at the entrance to the facility, pool enclosure and/or front check-in desk.
- Consider reducing maximum bather loads to minimize the number of patrons in the pool environment at one time.
- Public pools should keep a sign-in/sign-out sheet at the front desk so staff to track the number of patrons in the facility at one time.
- Commercial/strata pools should keep a sign-in/sign-out sheet at the entrance stating the maximum number of people allowed,, so patrons can self-regulate.
- Public pools may want to consider not offering public swims and instead only offer aquatic programs where the number of participants is known and can be controlled.
- Pools operated in strata complexes may want to provide a sign-up sheet so members of the same household can book a time slot to have private access to the facilities.
- Install shields (e.g. plexiglass) at front desks to protect administrative staff when interacting with patrons and collecting payments.
- Provide single-use disposable paper cups and a waste basket at drinking fountains.
- Remove shared equipment such as pool toys.
- Washrooms and showers must have liquid soap, paper towels and warm running water at all times.
- Increase deck space by removing unnecessary furniture and decorative items.
- Consider developing specialized checklists pool operators can use to evaluate COVID-19 measures being taken on the pool deck and any other associated common spaces.
- Equip the site with additional cleaning supplies at various locations (spray sanitizer and paper towels) so patrons can wipe down surfaces at their own discretion.

IMPORTANT:

- Many businesses are propping doors open so to minimize high touch surfaces. This is not recommended for pools because many doors and gates are critical for safety and to secure the pool enclosure, or for reasons of patron privacy (e.g. changing rooms).

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Physical Distancing

Goal: To increase the space between people (pool patrons, staff and lifeguards) to eliminate potential transmission of the virus.

Considerations:

- If using pool deck furniture, place markers on the deck at 6 foot increments for chairs, ensuring none are placed within the four foot perimeter of the pool.
- Mark 6 foot increments on floors where crowds normally form (e.g. line-up for diving board or slides).
- Auxiliary areas where physical distancing is difficult or impossible should remain closed (e.g. saunas, steam rooms, exercise areas).

IMPORTANT: Physical distancing measures must not undermine important safety features:

- Markings on pool decks must not create a slipping hazard (e.g. slippery tape).
- Markings on pool decks must not obstruct safety signs (e.g. depth marks, no diving).
- Care should be used when applying “6 foot” markings so as not to confuse physical distancing messaging with pool water depth.

Physical Distancing in Hot Tubs / Hydrotherapy Pools

- Re-calculate bather loads to ensure 6 feet of space between people or family units.
- Formula: Total feet of linear seating space / 6 = New Bather Load
- Consider placing markers around the hot tub perimeter to indicate 6 foot increments.
- Hot tubs with a diameter less than 6 feet must only be used by one person or family unit at a time.

IMPORTANT: Physical distancing is not relevant under the following circumstances:

1. When providing close supervision of children for whom one is responsible.
2. When providing assistance or carrying out lifesaving activities for a person in distress.
3. When providing assistance to those with disabilities.

Resources:

- Poster: [Physical Distancing](#)
- Video: [Why do we need to socially distance?](#)

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Signage

Goal: use signs in employee and public spaces to communicate important information about COVID-19.

Considerations:

- Place signs at entrances telling anyone entering not to enter if they are feeling ill.
- Post physical distancing signs in common areas.
- Post hand washing signs in washrooms and changing rooms.
- Post signage indicating the new reduced bather load(s) where applicable.
- Ensure signs contain clear language that is easy to understand.
- When possible, use signs that include diagrams and pictures.
- Post additional pool rules sign:
 - Do not use the pool if you are sick or feel unwell.
 - Everyone must wash hands when entering the pool area with liquid soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If liquid soap and water are not available use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
 - Shower before and after using the pool.
 - Do not spit or blow your nose into the water.
 - Practice physical distancing by keeping 2 meters from one another.

Resources:

- Poster: [Do Not Enter when Sick](#)
- Poster: [Coronavirus Prevention Poster](#)
- Poster: [Hand Washing Poster](#)

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Sanitation

Goal: Increase cleaning and disinfection of common touch points to prevent COVID-19 from spreading through contaminated surfaces.

Considerations:

- Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas (door handles, faucets, bathrooms, handrails, chairs and tables in pool viewing areas).
- Create a checklist of all high-touch surfaces that must be cleaned, determine the frequency of cleaning and disinfection based on your facility's needs.
- Record when cleaning and disinfection has occurred.
- Consider having separate cleaning supplies for different areas of the facility.
- Provide multiple plastic lined waste containers to dispose of used tissues, wipes, gloves, and other cleaning materials.
- When cleaning bathrooms and changing rooms, if possible, avoid production of aerosols (e.g. spraying with hose or power-washer). Instead, use a mop or brush.
- Lockers and cubbies used by pool patrons to store personal belongings should be cleaned and disinfected between uses (consider providing wipes for this purpose).
- Towels provided for public use should be laundered on the hottest possible setting.
- Personal Protective Equipment (mask, face shield, gloves & goggles etc.) for employees conducting regular pool maintenance duties are not mandatory unless normally required for safety reasons (e.g. when handling pool chemicals).

HOW to select and use a disinfectant

- Clean dirty surfaces with soap and water before disinfecting.
- Specialized disinfection products are not necessary, use regular disinfecting solutions found in your pool safety plan; chlorine-based products are recommended, avoid using quaternary ammonium in the pool area because it can create chloramines.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions when using disinfectants.
- Make sure the appropriate contact time is met (i.e. surfaces must remain wet with disinfectant for the correct length of time in order to destroy any contamination).

Resources:

- [Health Canada approved disinfectants for COVID-19](#)
- [BCCDC: Information on bleach concentrations to inactivate COVID-19](#)

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Employee Sickness and Return to Work Policy

Goal: To maintain healthy workers, maintenance personnel and lifeguards by ensuring that sick employees remain home for at least 10 days from the onset of symptoms and do not return to work until safe to do so.

Considerations:

- Develop an employee illness plan that is communicated to all staff.
- Have employees declare they are symptom-free when signing in for the day. If employees have any symptoms, even mild symptoms they must go home.
- If while at work, an employee starts experiencing symptoms of respiratory illness consistent with COVID-19, even if symptoms are mild, ask the employee to don a mask and to leave work immediately, go straight home, and have them contact their family physician/primary care provider or 8-1-1 for further guidance.
- Ensure that objects and surfaces touched by sick employees are disinfected before being used by others.
- Tell your employees that if they are sick with any symptoms of respiratory illness consistent with cold, influenza or COVID-19, even if symptoms are mild, they must not work, remain at home, and contact Health Link BC at 8-1-1.
- Sick employees should use the BC COVID-19 self-assessment tool.
- Anyone with symptoms can now be assessed and receive a COVID-19 test.
- Testing is not recommended for people who do not have symptoms.
- If an employee has a COVID-19 diagnosis, the local public health department will identify any co-workers who may have been exposed to the sick employee.
- The employer and employees should be reassured that if they haven't been contacted by public health then there is no issue or concern that was identified by public health.

Resources:

- [COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [Poster: COVID-19 Testing for all who Need It](#)

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Training

Goal: Provide training to all employees and lifeguards so they understand how to protect themselves and pool patrons from COVID-19.

Considerations:

- Train all employees about the virus so they know how to minimize its spread.
- Employees must wash their hands at the start of their shift, before eating or drinking, after touching shared items, after using the washroom, and before leaving work.
- Employees must follow cough and sneeze etiquette.
- Employees must avoid touching their face without first cleaning their hands.
- There should be no sharing of cigarettes or vaping equipment.
- Staff training sessions should be done in small groups with adequate social distancing, or online.
- Consider providing electronic COVID-19 resources to all employees.
- Communicate information in multiple languages.
- Make sure any person required to carry out enhanced cleaning has received the appropriate training, including how to use disinfectants.

Resources:

- [VIDEO: Transmission of the COVID-19 coronavirus](#)
- [Translated training materials and signage](#)
- [Video: Cough & sneeze etiquette](#)
- [Video: Hand Washing](#)