



## **FITNESS INDUSTRY COUNCIL OF CANADA**

### **Framework for Exercise Facilities Operating in a COVID-19 Environment in Ontario**

**This document is designed to provide a framework for managing risks associated with COVID-19 within Exercise Facilities and Exercise Providers in Ontario. It provides recommendations for Exercise Providers that are evidence based and follow a risk-minimization model. These guidelines have been modelled after successful industry launches in New Zealand, British Columbia, and Alberta.**

**Each facility is encouraged to create their own set of operating procedures with more granular details.**



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

**The Fitness Industry Council of Canada (FIC)** is a non-profit trade association representing for profit, non-profit, municipal, boutique and large format fitness facilities across the country. We also represent the interests of fitness education, certification providers and industry suppliers.

Representing over 6,000 facilities serving over 6 million members nationwide, FIC pursues a legislative agenda in the hopes of bettering the fitness industry for both consumers and professionals.

**Benefits of Exercise:** While not specifically outlined in this document, it should be noted that regular exercise is one of the most beneficial activities an individual can undertake to improve their health.

Normally, the list of the benefits of exercise is wide and varied – everything from being protective against stroke, heart disease and many other chronic diseases and conditions, all the way through to its role in weight management and diabetes control.

However, right now the focus is around mental health, and its proven benefits for mental health, which is protective against both depression and anxiety – two looming issues in the COVID-19 environment.

It should be mentioned that COVID-19 seems to pose an increased risk to Canadians who have underlying health concerns, many of which fall under various categories of metabolic disease. Regular exercise is well known to combat many of these ailments.

**This Framework:** This document provides solutions and recommendations to the unique environments of an exercise setting operating within a COVID-19 environment.

Our recommended protocols and practices meet all Government general principles and guidelines to operate at Phase 2, while also considering the unique environment and challenges of an exercise setting.

**We are recommending that all Exercise Providers in Ontario follow these protocols.**



## OBJECTIVES

### **The Objectives of this framework are:**

1. To develop a framework that provides a safe environment for participants to return to exercise facilities in Ontario that meets both Ontario Government standards, but also considers international and national best practices.
2. Provide guidance to those operating Exercise Facilities in Ontario.
3. To provide “Trust and Confidence” to both the Government and the Ontario public, that the fitness industry providers take COVID-19 safety seriously and is taking all practical steps to mitigate this serious issue.
4. To provide protocols for Exercise Providers to exceed the Provincial standards to safely operate in Phase 2.

## ASSUMPTIONS:

All participants in a facility are treated as if they may be infected with COVID-19.

Restrictions in Government operations will be in place for the foreseeable future, thus requiring operators to create sustainable changes to their operational strategies.

The standards set forth are based on international and national best practices and could change rapidly.

### **This strategy will involve 4 key pillars:**

1. Containment and contact tracing
2. Cleaning and sanitization
3. Staffing
4. Operations



## **01 CONTAINMENT AND CONTACT TRACING:**

- A. Control Access:** Gyms and Fitness Centres need to have at least one staff member present when open. Maintaining physical distancing cannot be ensured if patrons have uncontrolled access. Additionally, staff are needed to ensure that disinfection of equipment is being performed after each use. Twenty-four-hour unrestricted access without staff present on site should not be allowed.
- B. Unit Occupancy:** The number of patrons allowed into the facility at any one time should be limited to:
- i. Ensure there is sufficient space to allow patrons to remain two metres from one another.
  - ii. Prevent large gatherings.
  - iii. Allow staff sufficient time to clean equipment and other surfaces frequently.

Based on the above considerations, Operators need to determine the maximum number of patrons they can safely allow in the facility in advance of opening.

- C. Post Signs:** Place signs at any entrance to notify patrons that they should not enter if they have the symptoms of COVID-19 (see “D” below). Signs should be posted throughout the facility to make patrons aware of the physical distancing requirements, enhanced sanitation procedures (including reminders for members to wipe equipment before and after each use), and any other instructions and limitations, as applicable.
- D. Screen Arriving Patrons:** Patrons can be asked the following questions when they arrive:
- i. Do you have any of the following symptoms: fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat and painful swallowing, stuffy or runny nose, loss of sense of smell, headache, muscle aches, fatigue or loss of appetite?
  - ii. Are you, or anyone you are living with, either sick, self-isolating, or quarantined?

Any patron who answers yes to either of the questions above should not be permitted to enter. It is recommended that anyone who has the symptoms of COVID-19 call 8-1-1.

- E. Manage Patron Entry Points:** Place markers such as tape or cones every two metres at entrances to provide patrons with visible queues that encourage physical distancing. Entrances can also include entrances into rooms such as studios or locker rooms



- F. Manage Equipment Access:** Where possible, increase the space between cardio machines to achieve adequate distancing between users (i.e.: extra spacing or every second machine out of service).
- G. Encourage physical distancing and discourage congregating:** Patrons should be encouraged to conduct their workout and exit the facility without unnecessary delay.
- H. Group Classes must accommodate the 2-metre rule at all times during the session:** If group classes are offered, they should also be scheduled to allow staff adequate time to clean equipment and surfaces before each class.
- I. The following facilities and equipment should be closed:** basketball courts and other group sport areas that would not be able to accommodate social distancing. (Tennis would be ok, squash would need to be closed), saunas and steam rooms.
- J. Limit locker room use and avoid use if possible:** Patrons should be encouraged to arrive at the gym or fitness centre in workout clothes and to avoid using locker rooms on site. When locker rooms are used, a disinfectant spray or wipes should be available for patrons to disinfect locker contact surfaces before and after use.
- K. Wherever applicable, do not offer food service, other than take-out.**
- L. Close patron water fountains:** Patrons should be advised to bring their own filled water bottles or use touchless filling stations provided by the facility.
- M. Consider developing online fitness sessions:** If practical, online sessions may be an alternative option until such time as physical distancing recommendations are suspended.

**The fitness industry is very well equipped to both contain the spread of the virus within a facility, but also assist provincial health authorities with timely and accurate contact tracing upon request.**



## **02. CLEANING AND SANITIZATION:**

- A. Members will be encouraged to sanitize their equipment before and after use.** Disinfectants for patrons should be conveniently located. Patrons should be required to wipe down the equipment with disinfectant wipes before and after use. Use of re-usable towels and cloths should be discontinued.
- B. Use appropriate disinfectants.** Gyms and fitness centres must verify that any disinfectant(s) they use are effective against SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19). To do this:
- i. Use the list on Health Canada's website to identify if a disinfectant has been reviewed and confirmed to be effective against SARS-CoV-2;
  - ii. Use the list on the EPA's website to identify if a disinfectant has been reviewed and confirmed to be effective;
  - iii. Contact the disinfectant supplier or manufacturer to identify if the disinfectant has been confirmed to be effective;
  - iv. Make a 500 parts per million chlorine disinfectant solution using bleach and water. To make a solution of this concentration: mix 1-part bleach to 99-parts water (e.g. mix 10 ml bleach (5.25%) with 990 ml water).
- C. Staff will perform routine sanitization of high touch items** such as door handles, taps, cardiovascular equipment consoles. The industry suppliers have made recommendations on proper cleaning chemicals for various surfaces (plastic, vinyl, tile, etc.).
- D. Studios will be thoroughly cleaned after each class** and classes will be scheduled to accommodate sufficient cleaning between them.
- E. Hard to clean equipment will be removed** such as foam rollers, yoga blocks, straps, ropes, etc. Shared equipment (boxing gloves) would also be removed.
- F. Carpets must be vacuumed daily.**
- G. Cleaning logs will be kept** and made available upon request.
- H. Staff who are undertaking deep cleans will be provided with PPE** such as gloves and masks.



### **03. STAFFING – TO ENSURE STAFF SAFETY, THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES ARE RECOMMENDED**

- A. **Contactless interactions** for both checking into a facility and providing equipment.
- B. **Staff who feel unwell** would be expected to stay home and self-quarantine for 14 days.
- C. **Staff will need to be trained** to follow all new operating procedures.

### **04. OPERATIONS**

These steps will help operators create their own policy and procedures manuals considering common interaction touch points with patrons:

- A. **Checking-in to the facility**
  - i. Spacing at entrance..
  - ii. Contactless check-in.
- B. **Locker Rooms**
  - i. Spacing at entrance and exit.
  - ii. Locker assignment or spacing.
  - iii. Cleaning of high touch surfaces.
- C. **Cardiovascular Equipment**
  - i. Spacing to accommodate physical distancing.
  - ii. Cleaning of high touch surfaces.
- D. **Strength Training**
  - i. Spacing to accommodate for physical distancing.
  - ii. Directional floor markers to assist with traffic flow.
  - iii. Removal of hard to clear items such as foam roller, ropes, etc.
- E. **Yoga/MindBody**
  - i. Spacing to accommodate physical distancing.
  - ii. Spacing upon entrance in the studio.
  - iii. Removal of hard to clean items such as foam rollers, yoga straps, etc.
  - iv. Studio clean before and after each class.
- F. **Indoor Cycle (Spin)**
  - i. Spacing to accommodate physical distancing.
  - ii. Studio clean before and after each class.
- G. **Control application of no-show fees** such that they do not encourage participants to attend despite feeling ill.
- H. **Reduce hours of operation for 24-hour facilities** to ensure proper conduct by members as well as cleaning protocols by staff.