

# WISCONSIN

GUIDANCE ON PREPARING WORKPLACES FOR COVID-19



GYMS AND FITNESS FACILITIES



Gyms and fitness facilities provide an important outlet for people seeking to improve their health and well-being. These facilities span a wide range of types, ranging from full-service facilities to specialty and boutique offerings. While many facilities have found ways to connect with their customers virtually, there is no replacement for the use of equipment and personal training services to meet individual customer needs. To ensure consistency in keeping you and your employees safe, this guide is intended to provide general guidelines and best practices for gyms and fitness facilities looking to take steps to open their facility when it is time to do so. In addition, please see the **“General Guidance for All Businesses”** document for guidance that applies to all industries, and please consult the other available industry guides as relevant for your specific business type.

Gyms and fitness facilities are faced with many challenges that must be addressed before reopening, including employee training and protection, minimizing the risk of transmission in the facility, and protecting customers. This document is designed to address these and other key challenges. Using personal protective equipment (PPE), physical barriers, physical distancing, appropriate cleaning and disinfection procedures, and the other steps described below can help minimize the potential for exposure and the spread of COVID-19.

## Recommendations for Gyms and Fitness Facilities

### Employee health and hygiene

- ▶ Employees who have a fever or other symptoms of COVID-19 should be instructed to stay home. Consider a wellness check of employees each day.
- ▶ Maintain an adequate supply of paper towels, soap and hand sanitizer to allow employees to practice proper hand hygiene.
- ▶ Provide tissues for proper cough/sneeze etiquette and no-touch disposal receptacles.
- ▶ Employees should take these steps:
  - ▶ Wash hands on arrival at work, after working with each member, after touching their mask, after using the restroom and when leaving work.
  - ▶ Wear a mask at work if physical distancing cannot be maintained on the job (for example, personal trainers and staff assisting members with exercises).
  - ▶ Let the employer know if they have concerns about the PPE that is being provided.
- ▶ Carry a towel. If employees get the urge to sneeze or cough, they should use the towel to cover their nose, mouth and mask, then wash their hands and face thoroughly before going back to work.

### Clean and disinfect

- ▶ According to Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and other credible health resources, COVID-19 is not spread through sweat. Still, items touched by many people in a gym (like barbells, weight machines and aerobic fitness equipment) must be regularly disinfected because respiratory droplets can settle on them.



PROTECT



WASH OFTEN



DISINFECT



CAUTION



- ▶ Maintain an adequate supply of cleaning and disinfection products. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed a list of [products](#) that meet EPA criteria for use against the COVID-19 virus. Review product labels and safety data sheets and follow manufacturer specifications.
- ▶ If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- ▶ Consider using a checklist or audit system to track how often cleaning is conducted.
- ▶ Identify staff members who will be responsible for ensuring regular cleaning and disinfection.
- ▶ Provide materials for members to wipe/disinfect equipment before and after exercise at each location/station/piece of equipment.
- ▶ Increase the number of wipe stations through the facility.
- ▶ If members do not wipe/disinfect equipment after exercise, consider providing “ready to clean” tags that members can place on equipment after use, signaling staff to ensure equipment is disinfected before the next use.
- ▶ Establish “before and after” workout and locker room handwashing or sanitizing for all members and staff. Provide handwashing stations at the front of the facility, or provide hand sanitizer if handwashing is not feasible.
- ▶ Minimize sharing of work tools and equipment such as phones, keyboards, cash registers and point-of-sale devices. If sharing is necessary, disinfect equipment before and after each use.
- ▶ Clean HVAC intakes and returns daily.
- ▶ Towels and work clothing should be placed in plastic bags after each use, treated as potentially contaminated, and laundered by washing and drying on the highest temperature setting allowable for the fabric. Face coverings should be worn when staff handles dirty laundry. If members bring towels to the facility, the towels must be brought in clean and taken home by the member after working out.
- ▶ Increase cleaning frequency for restrooms, showers and locker rooms, and consider design changes:
  - ▶ Doors to multi-stall restrooms should be able to be opened and closed without touching handles if feasible. Consider adding a foot pull to the door if one is not already in place. Place a trash can by the door if the door cannot be opened without touching the handle, so restroom users can cover the handle with a paper towel and easily dispose of it afterward.
  - ▶ For single-occupancy restrooms, provide signage and materials (paper towels and trash cans) for individuals to use without touching the handles. Consider restricting access with a key to allow better monitoring of restroom use and prompt disinfection.
  - ▶ Post signs indicating that toilet lids (if present) should be closed before flushing.
  - ▶ Post signs asking members and employees to wash hands before and after using the restroom.
  - ▶ Provide paper towels and disconnect or tape off hand air dryers.
  - ▶ Only allow shower and locker room use if partitions are in place or signs have been posted to specify physical distancing requirements. If partitions or proper distancing are not possible, these facilities should remain closed.
  - ▶ Water shoes should be worn in locker rooms and showers.



## Physical distancing for equipment layout and activities

- ▶ Consider spacing equipment at least six feet apart, with greater distancing for treadmills and other high-exertion aerobic fitness equipment. Equipment can be arranged in an "X" pattern to provide greater distancing.
- ▶ Physical barriers can also be helpful to create distancing or segregate exercise areas.
- ▶ Limit the number of members in the facility at one time. Only those members that are actually exercising should be inside the facility. Members should not check in at a front desk or wait in a reception area.
- ▶ Use self check-in, or place a barrier or partition between front desk staff and members arriving to check in.
- ▶ Consider developing online signup systems (e.g., first-come, first-served) with set-duration (e.g., one hour) workout periods.
- ▶ Consider creating specific hours for older adults with admittance by reservation only.
- ▶ Use tape, markers, paint and signage to mark distancing for members.
- ▶ Consider offering planned circuit type workouts that facilitate distancing and allow for wiping/disinfection of equipment during recovery between exercises.
- ▶ Group exercise classes should only be offered if distancing requirements can be maintained and there is no person-to-person physical contact.
- ▶ Basketball courts and other areas where physical contact sports occur should be closed.
- ▶ Saunas and steam baths should be closed or limited to one member or family unit at a time.
- ▶ Staff should monitor physical distancing requirements in large whirlpools or swimming pools in outdoor or well-ventilated spaces and limit the number of members based on the size of the pool. See the guidelines for entertainment and amusement facilities for more information on pool reopening and safe operation. Water fountains should be closed, and members encouraged to bring their own water.
- ▶ Juice bars and other food service areas should follow guidelines for restaurants.
- ▶ Establish prepay systems or self-checkout systems (e.g., portable credit card portals that are cleaned after each use). Discourage the use of cash.
- ▶ If a prepay system is not feasible, consider using a plexiglass partition between cashiers and members.
- ▶ Members should use their own pens to sign credit card authorizations. If a pen provided by the facility must be used, it should be disinfected after each use. The same applies for touchpad use.
- ▶ Establish an isolated area for all delivery companies to drop off materials and supplies (i.e., minimize their presence in the facility).



## Face coverings and gloves

- ▶ Supply face masks or cloth face coverings for all employees.
- ▶ Instruct your employees in how to properly put on and remove a face mask or cloth face covering. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides guidance on how to properly wear a face covering and offers [tutorials for how to make one](#).
- ▶ If gloves are used, ensure they are changed after working with each member and that staff wash their hands after removing gloves.
- ▶ All members should wear face coverings when entering and leaving the facility, and should consider wearing a mask during workouts.
- ▶ Consider making face masks available to members who do not bring their own for use at your facility. Considerations should be made for members who are unable or unwilling to wear a mask or cloth face cover.

## Engineering controls

- ▶ Consult an HVAC professional about increasing ventilation rates, the percentage of outdoor air that circulates into the system, maintaining relative humidity at 40 to 60% and placing restrooms under negative pressure.
- ▶ Workplaces should consider [guidance from the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers](#) when discussing ventilation changes with HVAC professionals.
- ▶ If fans such as pedestal fans or hard-mounted fans are used in the facility, take steps to minimize air from fans blowing directly from one person toward another. If fans are disabled or removed, employers should remain aware of possible heat hazards and take steps to mitigate them.

## Member health and safety

- ▶ Use social media and other communication to educate members on the steps being taken for their protection and what they need to do to protect staff as well.
- ▶ Here's what to ask of members, in person and through your communications:
  - ▶ If you are sick, stay home. If you have a temperature, stay home. If someone in your house is sick, stay home. If you have allergies and can't control sneezing, stay home.
  - ▶ Use online gym/workout services if possible.
  - ▶ When walking through the facility, maintain a distance of at least six feet from other members and employees if at all possible.
  - ▶ Plan your workout routine ahead of time to avoid lingering and socializing. This will allow more members to work out given the reduced occupancy necessitated by distancing requirements.
  - ▶ Limit the items you touch within the gym to only the items you will use.
  - ▶ Wear a mask as you enter and leave the building. Consider wearing a mask during your workout.
  - ▶ Avoid using lifting gloves or other personal items that are not easily cleaned.
  - ▶ Wipe down each piece of equipment before and after you use it, using a fresh wipe each time, and dispose of the wipes appropriately.
  - ▶ Wash your hands before and after you leave the facility. If it is not possible to wash your hands, use hand sanitizer when you enter and before you leave.

- ▶ If you get the urge to sneeze or cough, put on your mask (if not already wearing one) and cover your nose, mouth and mask with a napkin or handkerchief. Wash your hands and face thoroughly before returning to your activity.
- ▶ The facility has the right to refuse service to anyone exhibiting symptoms or not following facility guidelines.
- ▶ Consider a wellness screening with brief questions for members to enter the facility. For example:
  - ▶ Have you, or has a person you have been in close contact with, been diagnosed with COVID-19 within the last 14 days? (Close contact is defined as six feet or less for more than 10 minutes.)
  - ▶ Have you experienced any cold- or flu-like symptoms in the last 72 hours (including fever, shortness of breath, cough, sore throat or difficulty breathing)?
- ▶ Post signage on the front door letting members know about changes to your policies and instructing them to stay away if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.
- ▶ Install handwashing or sanitizing stations (with at least 60% alcohol if offering hand sanitizer) at the entrance to your business and encourage members to use them.
- ▶ Staff should visibly carry out proper sanitation practices and should actively encourage members to follow these practices.
- ▶ Remove all unnecessary touchpoints, especially those that cannot be sanitized.
- ▶ Use disposable instead of reusable items whenever possible. Provide adequate trash receptacles, and increase trash removal frequency to accommodate additional waste.
- ▶ Discourage members from touching items they don't intend to purchase.

## Business operations

- ▶ Common-use areas (such as changing rooms, lounge areas, courtesy food and beverage bars, and child play areas) should be closed if it is not possible to maintain social distancing and follow proper sanitizing practices.
- ▶ The facility must maintain adequate records of its members, including names, telephone numbers and visit dates, to assist if contact tracing becomes necessary. The facility must also maintain accurate work records of its staff for contact tracing purposes.

- ▶ Encourage members to use touchless payment options when available. Minimize handling cash, credit cards, reward cards and mobile devices.

## Employee training, support and communication

- ▶ Use routine meetings and emails to communicate with workers about actions being taken to prevent COVID-19 exposure.
- ▶ Provide instruction and training to employees on topics including:
  - ▶ How to clean their work clothing properly at home if laundry service is not provided
  - ▶ How to safely put on and remove gloves
  - ▶ Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces according to product specifications
  - ▶ Correct use of face masks or coverings
  - ▶ Physical distancing guidelines and ways to communicate them to members
  - ▶ Employee illness reporting
- ▶ Train employees on how to recognize areas or practices that pose a risk for spreading the virus.
- ▶ Define a process to quickly review concerns and provide mitigation strategies in these areas. Include a recognizing/reporting module in your COVID-19 response plan.
- ▶ Consider assigning one or more employees to monitor compliance with workplace guidance.
- ▶ Post signage to remind your employees of safe practices, such as distancing, hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette.

## Additional resources

CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to COVID-19: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019)

CDC General Business Frequently Asked Questions: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019)

American Industrial Hygiene Association Back to Work Safely webpage with guidance for gyms and workout facilities as well as other sectors: [www.backtoworksafely.org](http://www.backtoworksafely.org)

U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19: [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)



### IN PARTNERSHIP WITH WISCONSIN'S REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS:

7 Rivers Alliance  
Centergy  
Madison Region  
Economic Partnership  
Milwaukee 7

Momentum West  
Prosperity Southwest  
Grow North  
The New North  
Visions Northwest

# CHECKLIST GUIDE FOR REOPENING

## Your Gym or Fitness Facility

After reading through the available guidance for your business sector at [wedc.org/reopen-guidelines](https://wedc.org/reopen-guidelines) use this checklist to ensure that you have taken the necessary steps to open your business safely, protecting the health of your employees and customers.

In addition to reviewing this checklist, be sure to consult your local health department, as some communities may have additional local regulations in place.

### Policy Checklist

- Create a policy for identification and isolation of sick people, including employee self-monitoring, required reporting of illness, sick leave policies and isolating individuals that become ill at work.
- Consider implementing a wellness screening with brief questions for customers to enter the facility.
- Assess leave policies for quarantined/isolated workers and those caring for sick family members.
- Create a policy on personal protective equipment (PPE). Recommend that employees wear face masks or cloth face coverings when social distancing is not feasible, and recommend usage of face masks or cloth face coverings for public-facing activities.
- Connect employees to employee or community assistance resources such as the Wisconsin COVID-19 hotline (211) or COVID-19 Resilient Wisconsin [dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19)
- Create a client service policy. To the extent possible, clients should wear face coverings when receiving services. Recommend clients bring their own face mask or covering, and also provide them for clients who don't bring their own. Considerations should be made for clients who are unable or unwilling to wear a mask or cloth face cover. Refuse service to any client who arrives with symptoms.
- Create a response plan in the event that an employee has COVID-19 symptoms or is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19. This should include criteria for impacted employees to return to work and guidance for identifying, communicating with and accommodating potentially exposed workers.

### Communications Plan Checklist

- Establish an employee communications schedule and develop a training plan for employees with modules on social distancing, hygiene and sanitation best practices, what to do if they feel sick, proper use of PPE and cloth face coverings, and how to educate customers about the new policies and practices.
- Develop a marketing plan for customers that addresses business signage, social media communications, new business policies and customer instructions (stay home if you are sick, limit items you touch, closure of common areas, hygiene including handwashing, social distancing reminder).
- Communicate with vendors/suppliers for contactless dropoff or to arrange deliveries during non-customer hours.
- Establish a system for continually updating customers on activity or service options and policies as circumstances change.

### Facility Plan Checklist

- Post signage about policy changes for customers and employees.
- Provide tissues and no-touch trash receptacles.
- Set up sanitizer or handwashing stations in convenient locations around the business.

- Remove unnecessary touchpoints and items that cannot be sanitized between uses (e.g., extra equipment, magazines). Store any shared items behind counters and provide them to customers upon request so sanitizing can be completed after each use.
- Install social distancing markers or directional arrows on floors to encourage maintaining distance of at least six feet where possible, and to minimize contact.
- Increase physical space between equipment to six feet where possible. Consider greater distancing for high-exertion aerobic fitness equipment such as treadmills. Equipment can be arranged in an X pattern to provide greater distancing.
- Provide disinfectant wipes adjacent to equipment for use before and after each exercise. Consider 'ready to clean' tags that customers can place on equipment after each use.
- Consider adding clear plastic barrier protection at the cash register or entrance desk.
- Use disposable instead of reusable items whenever possible (e.g., drinking glasses, key cards).
- Close common areas such as lounge areas, courtesy food and beverage bars, and child play areas if possible. If left open, sanitize after each use.
- Basketball courts and other physical contact sports areas should be closed.
- Minimize the need for employees to share equipment/tools (e.g., pens, markers, scissors, walkie-talkies) by purchasing additional sets as needed. If items must be shared, provide a means to sanitize them after each use.
- Consult with an HVAC professional and review national guidance when considering ventilation changes to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

## Operations Plan Checklist

- Before you reopen, sanitize; consult on HVAC and water systems, possibly increasing air flow; and ensure fans are not blowing air directly from one person toward another.
- Assign one or more staff members (ideally one per shift) to take the lead on cleaning and disinfecting. Review cleaning/disinfecting/sanitizing product labels to determine glove and other PPE requirements. Provide chemical hazard training to employees.
- Increase cleaning frequency for restrooms, showers and locker rooms, and consider design changes to separate users.
- Eliminate unnecessary physical contact between staff and customers.
- Reduce capacity if possible to ensure adequate social distancing.
- For programmed events, stagger start times to reduce density of participants, minimize overlap and accommodate adequate cleaning. Programmed activities should include registered individuals only, or include collection of participant information to assist with contact tracing.
- Disposable items should be used instead of reusable items whenever possible. No refills (such as popcorn boxes and drink containers) should be allowed.
- Purchase face masks or cloth face coverings for customers and PPE for staff.
- Purchase cleaning supplies appropriate to sanitize the type of surfaces and products found in your facility.

- Towels and clothing should be placed in plastic bags after each use. Towels and work clothing should be washed at the highest appropriate temperature setting and dried thoroughly between uses. Towels brought by customers must be clean upon arriving and taken home after each visit.
- Create a plan for accommodating at-risk customers by continuing virtual offerings or adding designated by-appointment-only hours.
- Hold in-person meetings or group classes in open, well-ventilated spaces when possible.
- Maintain adequate records of your staff and visiting customers, including names, telephone numbers and visit dates, to assist if contact tracing becomes necessary. Also maintain accurate work records of staff for contact tracing purposes.
- If you have on-premises food or restaurant facilities, please review the guidelines and checklist for restaurants and bars. [wedc.org/reopen-guidelines](https://wedc.org/reopen-guidelines)
- If you have on-premises swimming pools, whirlpools or other water facilities, please review the entertainment and amusement guidelines and checklist. [wedc.org/reopen-guidelines](https://wedc.org/reopen-guidelines)

## Cleaning Schedule

### Between Customers/Frequently

- Common areas (door handles, payment machines)
- Customer touchpoints (balls, shoes, harnesses, helmets)
- Restrooms

### Daily

- Clean HVAC intake
- Keep shared equipment that has been used (harnesses, lifejackets, etc.) out of circulation for 72 hours or sanitize it before returning to inventory.
- Follow restaurant guidelines for food service areas. [wedc.org/reopen-guidelines](https://wedc.org/reopen-guidelines)