

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

Guidance for Swimming Pools

Version 2
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Developed by Regional Health Authorities,
Ministry of Health and the BC Centre for Disease Control

Key Principles Going Forward



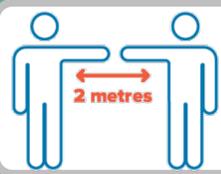
Stay Home if you are Sick

Stay away from others if you are feeling ill, isolate at home, do not go to work.



Practice Good Hygiene

Wash your hands often, avoid touching your face, cough/sneeze into your elbow or a tissue.



Make Space between People

Maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from others and replace close contact greetings like handshakes, hugs or high fives with waves and smiles.



Learn how to use Personal Protective Equipment as an Additional Control

Learn how to choose and use PPE correctly, know the limitations of PPE, and always have other controls in place.



Modify the Environment

Make your environment safer for interacting with others by reducing common touch surfaces, using non-porous barriers, or by changing room design.



Increase Sanitation

Disinfect common touch surfaces frequently using a chemical that will destroy the Coronavirus.



Manage Information

Stay informed, follow public health advice, keep records, and make sure information you communicate is clear, accurate and easy to find.

Guidance for Swimming Pools

Under [Phase 2 of British Columbia's Restart Plan](#), operation of swimming pools is allowed. However, the COVID-19 pandemic continues and in the absence of a vaccine, there is a continued need to reduce the risk of transmission through physical distancing, and ensuring essential hygienic practices and cleaning processes are followed.

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 safely and is properly maintained. The biggest risk to swimmers and staff are the interactions in and around the pools, and steps can be taken to reduce these risks.

In all cases, it remains important for everyone to stay home if you are sick, to wash your hands often, to keep your distance, and to disinfect high touch surfaces often.

All [BC Pool Regulation](#) requirements remain unchanged and in place.

You will need to develop and implement a [COVID-19 Safety Plan](#), post a copy on your website (if you have one) and at your workplace so that it is readily available for review by anyone who may attend the site, including the public. A copy must also be available to Environmental Health Officers or WorkSafe BC Officers, upon request.

This guidance provides information on ways to prevent transmission of COVID-19 to operators of swimming pools, and will support you in preparing your COVID-19 Safety Plan. 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 this guidance document which is meant to be supportive, not prescriptive.

Pursuant to section 13 of the BC Pool Regulation, operators will also need to update their [Pool Safety Plan](#) to include the relevant COVID-19 considerations, as described in this document.

PART 1 of this document will provide general information about COVID-19 and highlight how different control measures can be more or less effective at preventing transmission of the virus.

PART 2 of this document is organized into a series of tip sheets:

- Employee Sickness
- Personal Hygiene
- Make Space Between People
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Modify the Environment
- Sanitation
- Managing Information
- Signage

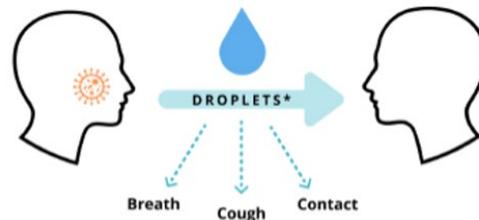
COVID-19 General Information

WHAT is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory infection caused by a newly identified virus (SARS-CoV-2). 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 COVID-19 Spreads

COVID-19 is spread through liquid droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus in these droplets can enter the body directly 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 viral particles floating in the air and is not something that can enter the body through the skin.



Resources:

- Video: [Transmission of the COVID-19 coronavirus](#)
- Video: [Cough & sneeze etiquette](#)

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:

- BC Centre for Disease Control
<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>
- BC Provincial Health Officer – Orders, Notices, and Guidance
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>
- WorkSafe BC – COVID-19 and the Workplace <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/news-events/announcements/2020/March/covid-19-and-the-workplace>

How to use this Guidance

This guidance contains suggested protocols for reducing the risks of COVID-19 transmission for swimming pools. Each business must assess and understand their own risks when developing their COVID-19 Safety Plan, and then implement their protocols accordingly.

Understanding the Risk

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads in several ways, including through droplets when a person coughs or sneezes, and from touching a contaminated surface before touching the face. Higher risk situations require adequate protocols to address the risk.

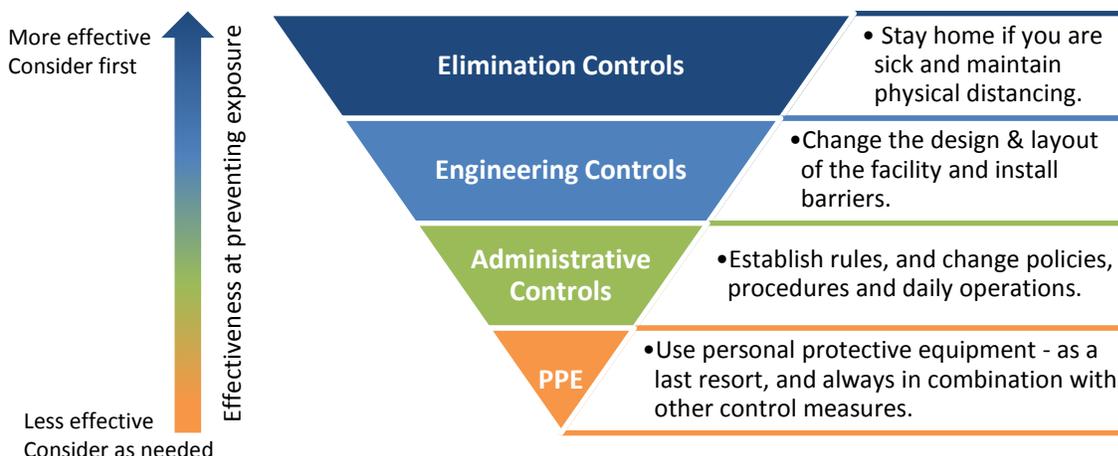
- The risk of person-to-person transmission can vary depending on the closer you come to other people, the amount of time you spend near them, and the number of people you come near. Physical distancing measures help mitigate this risk.
- The risk of surface transmission is increased when many people contact same surface, and when those contacts happen in short intervals of time. Effective cleaning and hygiene practices help mitigate this risk.

Selecting Protocols for your Pool

When selecting the appropriate combination of protocols for your workplace, it may be helpful to understand the relative impacts each can have on controlling the risk of transmission in your workplace. Some controls will be more difficult to implement but provide a greater level of protection, while other controls will be easier to implement but provide less overall protection.

Levels of Protection

Control measures throughout this document will be divided based on this model:



Elimination and engineering controls are designed to prevent people from coming into contact with an infectious person or contaminated surface in the first place and should be considered first. Following this model normally leads to the implementation of inherently safer systems, where the risk of illness exposure and/or transmission can be substantially reduced.

Important Points to Remember

There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to humans through the pool water. Proper operation, maintenance, and disinfection of pools and hot tubs with chlorine or bromine, should inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19. Nevertheless, appropriate care must still be taken both in and outside the pool, to protect yourself and others.

Only operate your Pool if Adequate Controls can be maintained

Facilities should designate a person responsible for the pool during all operational hours. If staffing or equipment shortages create an environment where necessary control measures for your facility 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.

Employees need Training

Employees and lifeguards should be trained on all new COVID-19 policies and procedures:

- Training sessions should be done in small groups or online if possible.
- Trainers should ensure all relevant guidance provided by [WorkSafe BC](#) and other associations (e.g. the [Royal Lifesaving Society of Canada](#)) is captured in the training.

Close Supervision and Emergency Situations

Physical distancing in an aquatic environment is not relevant under the following circumstances:

- When providing close supervision of children for whom one is responsible.
- When providing assistance to a person in distress.
- When providing first aid, or carrying out lifesaving activities.
- When providing assistance to those with disabilities.

Use Caution when applying Physical Distancing Markings

Physical distancing measures must not undermine important safety features:

- Markings on pool decks must not create a slipping hazard (e.g. no slippery tape).
- Markings on pool decks must not obstruct safety signs (e.g. depth marks, no diving).
- Care should be used when applying “2 metre” markings so as not to confuse physical distancing messaging with pool water depth.

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Tip Sheet – Employee Sickness

Goal: To prevent sick employees from spreading the virus to the public by ensuring employees stay home if they are ill.

Elimination Controls

- Tell your employees if they are sick with any symptoms consistent with cold, influenza or COVID-19, even if symptoms are mild, they must remain at home, and contact their family physician/primary care provider or Health Link BC at 8-1-1.

Administrative Controls

- Thoughtfully plan your sick leave policy to create an environment where employees feel supported in staying home when they are sick, and communicate the policy to all staff.
- Have operational contingency plans in cases where employees must remain home when sick (e.g. modifying systems to operate with fewer employees).
- Have employees declare they are symptom-free when signing in for the day.
- 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, to leave work immediately, go straight home, and contact their a family physician/primary care provider or Health Link BC at 8-1-1 for further guidance.
- Ensure that objects and surfaces touched by sick employees who have gone home are cleaned and disinfected before being used by others.
- 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:

- [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#)

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Tip Sheet – Personal Hygiene

Goal: To limit spread of the virus by promoting good personal hygiene including hand washing, hand sanitizing, and cough/sneeze etiquette.

Elimination Controls

- Consider replacing physical greetings such as handshakes and hugs with non-contact greetings.

Engineering Controls

- A supply of alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be provided at the entrance to the facility, pool enclosure and/or front check-in desk.
- Washrooms and dedicated hand washing sinks should have liquid soap, paper towels and warm running water at all times.

Administrative Controls

- Employees should wash their hands with soap and water at the start and end of their shift, after using the bathroom, before eating, after returning from a break, and when hands are visibly soiled.
- Employees should avoid the use of hand sanitizer when handling food.
- Employees should practice good hygiene throughout their shift including proper hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette.
- Employees should avoid touching their face without washing hands first.
- There should be no sharing of cigarettes or vaping equipment.
- Employees should be educated about the virus so they know how to minimize its spread.
- Consider providing electronic COVID-19 resources to all employees.

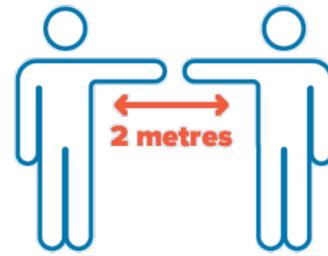
Resources:

- Poster: [BCCDC Handwashing](#)
- Video: [Hand Washing](#)
- Video: [Cough and Sneeze Etiquette](#)
- Link: [BCCDC Vaping, Smoking and COVID-19](#)

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Tip Sheet – Make Space between People



Goal: To increase space between people and avoid unnecessary contact to eliminate transmission of the virus through respiratory droplets.

Elimination Controls

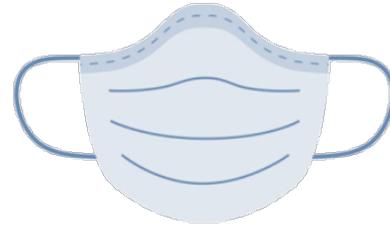
- Consider reducing the maximum bather load to minimize the number of patrons in the pool at one time.
- A 2 metre “bubble” of space should be maintained around each patron using the pool or hot tub, unless they are from the same party.
- For large hot tubs, consider placing marks around the hot tub edge at 2 metre increments.
- Hot tubs with a diameter less than 2 metres should only be used by one person or family unit at a time.
- Marking 2 metre increments where crowds normally form could help to remind patrons about physical distancing (e.g. line-up at diving board/slides/showers).
- Consider using one-way markers in deck spaces so people do not have to pass each other, particularly in change-rooms.
- Auxiliary areas where physical distancing is difficult or impossible should remain closed (e.g. saunas, steam rooms, exercise areas).
- Consider closing spectator areas unless seating can be arranged to maintain a minimum of 2 metres between people.
- If using pool deck furniture, markers could be placed at 2 metre increments to indicate chair positioning, ensuring none are placed within the four-foot perimeter of the pool.
- Aquatic programs capable of consistently maintaining 2 metres of separation may be possible, at the discretion of the program manager.
- Length swimming may be allowed where at least 2 metre spacing can be achieved in the lane (e.g. max 7 people per lane for 25m length pools). Also, consider using circular lanes; having bathers swim down one lane and up another.
- Provide 2 metre separation between participants in fitness classes such as water aerobics.
- Swimming lessons which involve physical contact between the instructor and students (or between students) should be discouraged.

Resources:

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

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Tip Sheet – Personal Protective Equipment

Goal: To understand the limitations of personal protective equipment and to ensure that when used, PPE is selected and used appropriately.

Personal Protective Equipment

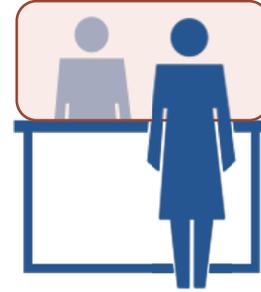
- Personal protective equipment (mask, face shield, gloves & goggles) for employees conducting regular pool maintenance duties are not mandatory unless normally required for safety reasons (e.g. when handling pool chemicals).
- Masks should never be relied upon as a sole protective measure.
- In situations where the other controls cannot be maintained, pool operators may choose to wear non-medical masks and face shields.
- The use of non-medical masks may help prevent the risk of transmission from the wearer.
- Employees who choose to wear a non-medical mask should be aware of the following:
 - Masks can become contaminated on the outside when touched by hands so employees should avoid touching or adjusting them often.
 - Masks that become wet, soiled or damaged are less effective and should be replaced immediately.
 - Masks should be put on and taken off correctly, including not touching the front of the mask, and washing hands.
 - Cloth masks should be washed every day using the warmest water setting, and stored in a clean dry place to prevent contamination.
 - Never share masks with others.
 - If a non-cloth mask is used (e.g. medical mask), employees should be reminded these items are single-use. In addition to following safe procedures for putting them on and taking them off, they cannot be cleaned or reused.

Resources:

- Video: [How to remove disposable gloves](#)
- WorkSafe BC: [Selecting and Using Masks](#)
- Worksafe BC [How to Use a Mask](#)
- BCCDC: [Guideline on Types of Masks](#)

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Tip Sheet – Modify the Environment

Goal: Change the environment to reduce common touch points and make interacting with others safer.

Engineering Controls

- Shields (e.g. plexiglass) could be installed at front desks and in lobbies to protect administrative staff when interacting with patrons and collecting payments.
- Wherever possible, cashless payment methods should be used at transaction counters.
- Floor space could be increased by removing unnecessary furniture and decorative items.
- The occupancy rate in change-rooms should be reduced to allow physical distancing by providing a minimum space of 5 square metres per person.
- Delineated areas could be created for patrons in change-rooms along with signage directing patrons to wait until a space is available. High-use facilities may require monitoring.
- Consider disabling some lockers to maintain 2 metres between in-use lockers. Re-locating lockers outside of change-rooms may also better facilitate physical distancing.
- Consider assigning lockers to keep track of when they have been used and require cleaning.
- Marker dots could be used on benches to indicate 2 metre spacing for patrons to change.
- The site could be equipped with additional cleaning supplies (spray disinfectant and paper towels) so patrons can wipe down surfaces at their own discretion.
- If applicable, guests could be provided with single-use personal items (e.g. soap, shampoo).
- Encourage patrons, where possible, to shower at home before and after swimming.
- If a shower is available near the pool deck (without the need to enter the change room), consider advocating its use.
- Consider cutting off water from showers located in close proximity to provide at least 2 metres between them.
- Remove shared equipment such as pool toys.
- Organize moveable equipment where possible to create more open space on pool decks.
- Remove unnecessary decorative items or furniture from the pool deck.

IMPORTANT: Propping entry or changing room doors open is not recommended for swimming pools because many doors and gates are critical for safety to secure the pool enclosure, or for reasons of patron privacy (e.g. changing rooms).

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Tip Sheet - Sanitation

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

Engineering Controls

- Consider having separate cleaning supplies for different areas of the facility.
- Multiple plastic lined waste containers should be available to dispose of used tissues, wipes, gloves, and other cleaning materials.

Administrative Controls

- The frequency of cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas (door handles, faucets, bathrooms, handrails, chairs and tables in pool viewing areas) should be increased.
- Consider creating a checklist of high-touch surfaces to be cleaned and disinfected, establish a frequency based on the facility's needs and modify according to usage patterns.
- Record when cleaning and disinfection has occurred.
- Damp cleaning methods should be employed such as clean wet cloths, and/or a wet mop. Avoid sweeping or dusting as these methods can distribute virus droplets into the air.
- 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.

SELECTION and USE of DISINFECTANTS in an AQUATIC ENVIRONMENT

- Dirty surfaces should be cleaned 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 as it can create chloramines.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions when using disinfectants.
- Make sure any person required to clean has received the appropriate training.

Resources:

- [Health Canada approved disinfectants for COVID-19](#)
- [BCCDC: Information on Cleaning and Disinfection](#)

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Tip Sheet – Managing Information

GOAL: To stay informed, follow public health advice, keep records, and make sure information you share is clear, accurate and easy to find.

Elimination Controls

- Public pools should employ a means of limiting the number of patrons on site, such as a sign-in/sign-out sheet with hand sanitizer at the front desk, so staff can track the number of patrons in the facility at one time.
- Commercial/strata pools could keep a sign-in/sign-out sheet at their entrances stating the maximum number of people allowed in the pool enclosure, so patrons can self-regulate.
- Commercial pools operated in conjunction with condos could provide sign-up sheets so members of the same household can book a private time slot to access the facilities.

Administrative Controls

- If practicable, retain contact information for one member of every party of patrons for 30 days in the event that there is a need for contact tracing on the part of the Medical Health Officer. The sign-in sheets mentioned above could be a way of doing this.
- Team members or a manager should keep daily records of the people who worked together and retain these records for at least 30 days.
- Consider maintaining up-to-date and consistent messaging on websites, social media, emails, press releases, and when speaking with customers so details are aligned, timely and accurate.
- Employees may be encouraged to provide regular feedback on any issues with COVID-19 prevention measures. Consider providing a means for employees to do this anonymously.

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Tip Sheet - Signage



Goal: To use signs in employee and public spaces to communicate important information about COVID-19 in a way that is clear and easy to understand.

Engineering Controls

- Signs at entrances could be used to tell anyone entering not to enter if they are feeling ill.
- Physical distancing signs could be placed in common areas.
- Hand washing signs could be posted in washrooms and changing rooms.
- Signage indicating the new reduced bather load(s) could be posted, where applicable.
- Additional pool rules signs may be appropriate, for example:
 - Do not use the pool if you are sick or feel unwell.
 - Everyone needs to wash their hands with liquid soap and paper towel when entering the pool area. If liquid soap and paper towel 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 metres from one another.

TIPS for EFFECTIVE SIGNAGE:

- Communicate information in multiple languages and use diagrams or pictures.
- The font size on signage should be large enough for everyone to read from a distance (i.e. if the person was standing 2 metres away from the sign).
- In wet areas or outside, posters could be placed in plastic sleeves to protect them from water damage.
- Consider placing important signage in conspicuous areas and away from other posted information so it is clearly visible (i.e. avoid posting signs by to product advertisements, coupon boards etc.).

Resources:

- Poster: [BCCDC Do Not Enter if Sick](#)
- Poster: [BCCDC Handwashing](#)
- Poster: [BCCDC Physical Distancing](#)
- Link: [Translated training materials and signage](#)