

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

Guideline for Swimming Pools

Version 1
June 3, 2020

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

Key Principles Going Forward



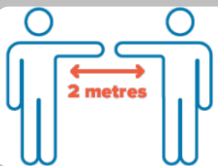
STAY HOME if you are SICK

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



PRATICE GOOD HYGIENE

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



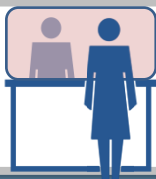
MAKE SPACE between PEOPLE

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.

Guideline 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 document provides guidance for preventing 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 these guidelines which are 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 guideline.

PART 1 of this guideline 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 guideline 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

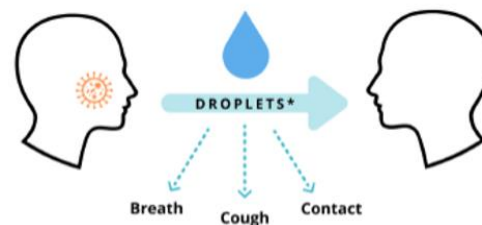
COVID-19 General Information

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 Guideline

This guideline contains suggested protocols for reducing the risks of Covid-19 transmission for public and commercial pools and hot tubs. Each facility 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.

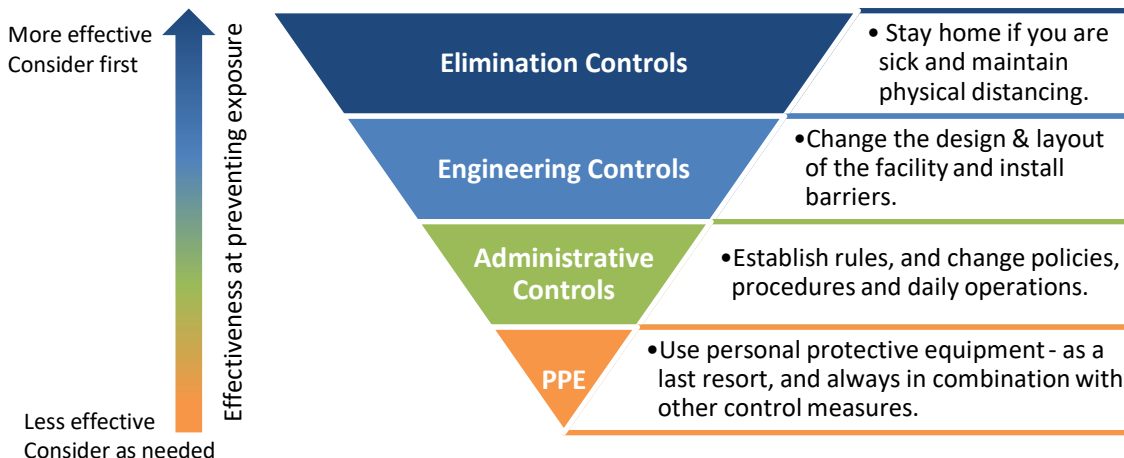
- The risk of person-to-person transmission can vary depending on the closer you come to other people, the amount of time you spend near them, and the number of people you come near. Physical distancing measures help mitigate this risk.
- The risk of surface transmission is increased when many people 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 must 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).
- 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, to go straight home, and to 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

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

Engineering Controls

- Provide a supply of alcohol-based hand sanitizer at the entrance to the facility, pool enclosure and/or front check-in desk.
- Washrooms and showers must have liquid soap, paper towels and warm running water at all times.

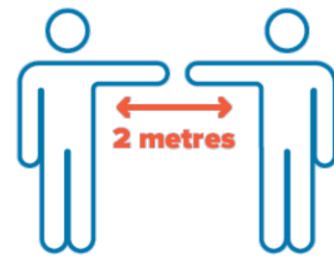
Administrative Controls

- Employees must wash their hands with soap and water at the start and end of their shift, before eating, after returning from a break, and when hands are visibly soiled.
- Hand sanitizing using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer should also be practiced frequently throughout the day, especially after touching people or their belongings.
- Employees must practice good hygiene throughout their shift including proper hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette.
- Employees must avoid touching their face without washing hands first.
- There should be no sharing of cigarettes or vaping equipment.
- Educate employees 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.

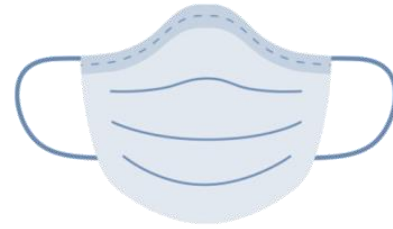
Elimination Controls

- Reduce maximum bather loads 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 must only be used by one person or family unit at a time.
- Mark 2 metre increments where crowds normally form (e.g. line-up at diving board/slides).
- Consider using one-way markers in deck spaces so people do not have to pass each other.
- 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, place markers on the deck 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 a minimum 2 metre spacing can be consistently achieved among the lane occupants (or a maximum of 7 people per 25 m lane).
- 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.

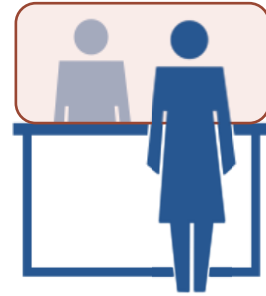
Personal Protective Equipment

- 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).
- 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 must 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 must be replaced immediately.
 - Masks must be put on and taken off correctly, including not touching the front of the mask, and washing hands.
 - Cloth masks must be washed every day using the warmest water setting, and stored in a clean dry place to prevent contamination.
 - Never share masks with others.

Resources:

- WorkSafe BC: [Selecting and Using Masks](#)
- World Health Organization: [How to Put on, Use, and Take off a Mask](#)

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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

Front Desks or Lobbies

- Install shields (e.g. plexiglass) at front desks and in lobbies to protect administrative staff when interacting with patrons and collecting payments.
- Wherever possible, install cashless payment methods at transaction counters.
- Increase floor space by removing unnecessary furniture and decorative items.

Changing Rooms

- Consider limiting use of changing room lockers to maintain 2 metres between in-use lockers; disable or remove locks from the nullified lockers.
- Consider assigning lockers to assist in keeping track of when they have been used and require cleaning.
- Use marker dots on the changing room benches to indicate 2 metre spacing for patrons to change.
- Equip the site with additional cleaning supplies (spray sanitizer and paper towels) so patrons can wipe down surfaces at their own discretion.
- If applicable, provide guests with single-use personal items (e.g. soap, shampoo).

On the Pool Deck

- Remove shared equipment such as pool toys.
- Organize moveable equipment where possible to create more open space,
- Remove unnecessary decorative items or furniture from the pool deck.

IMPORTANT:

Propping entry and changing room doors open 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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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.
- Provide multiple plastic lined waste containers to dispose of used tissues, wipes, gloves, and other cleaning materials.

Administrative Controls

- 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.
- 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.

SELECTION and USE of DISINFECTANTS in an AQUATIC ENVIRONMENT

- 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 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 keep a sign-in/sign-out sheet at the front desk so staff can track the number of patrons in the facility at one time.
- Commercial/strata pools should 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

- Have team members or a manager keep daily records of the people who worked together and retain these records for at least 30 days.
- Maintain up-to-date and consistent messaging on websites, in social media, emails, press releases, and during conversations with customers to ensure all details are aligned, timely and accurate.
- Encourage team members 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

- 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.
- Post additional pool rules signs:
 - 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.
- Ensure the font size on signage is large enough for everyone to read from a distance (i.e. if the person was standing 2 metres away from the sign).
- Put posters in plastic sleeves to protect them from water damage in wet areas or outside.
- Place important signage in conspicuous areas and away from other posted information so it is clearly visible (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](#)