

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Guidance: Requirements for Gyms, Studios, and Fitness Centers

05/17/2021

This guidance applies to all business and places of public accommodation (“businesses”)—as defined by Executive Order 21-11, as amended by Executive Order 21-21 and EO 21-23 (“EO”)—operating gymnasiums, fitness centers, recreation centers, sports facilities, climbing facilities, martial arts facilities, and dance and exercise studios from Friday, May 7, 2021 at 12 p.m. (noon) through May 27, 2021. Businesses must continue to follow all other applicable Stay Safe Industry Guidance found on the [Stay Safe Guidance website \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp). The EO requires all businesses to have and implement a written COVID-19 Preparedness Plan that addresses EO requirements and applicable Stay Safe Industry Guidance. For more information about Plan requirements, refer to the applicable [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities webpage \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp).

This guidance has been updated to align with EO 21-11, 21-21, and 21-23, a CDC transmission of COVID-19 update (05/13/2021 update), and removal of face covering EO requirements (05/14/2021).

Recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19

COVID-19 spreads when an infected person breathes out droplets and very small particles that contain the virus. These droplets and particles can be breathed in by other people; land in their eyes, nose, or mouth; or land on surfaces that people touch. The risk of COVID-19 transmission increases when people gather with other households. Several key strategies can reduce the risk of getting sick or transmitting COVID-19:

- ✓ Get vaccinated. Vaccination is one of the best things you can do to prevent getting or spreading COVID-19. Visit [COVID-19 Vaccine \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/index.html).
- ✓ Wear a face covering when recommended by MDH or CDC.

- There is no longer a statewide requirement to wear face coverings in most settings. However, other federal, state, and/or local laws may require face coverings in some settings, and businesses may set their own requirements. Additionally, Minnesota’s Safe Learning Plan, along with the existing face covering guidance for schools and childcare settings, remains in effect.
 - For more information about face covering recommendations, refer to [MDH Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html>) and [MDH Frequently Asked Questions About Wearing Face Coverings](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecoverfaq.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecoverfaq.html>).
- ✓ If you are not vaccinated:
- Keep at least 6 feet of physical distance from other households and follow the face covering recommendations in the above MDH resources.
- ✓ Vaccinated or not vaccinated, MDH strongly recommends that everyone:
- Wash their hands often.
 - Follow guidance on staying home (quarantine) if you were exposed to someone who has COVID-19. People who are fully vaccinated may not need to quarantine in many situations. Refer to [Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19 \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf) for more details.
 - Stay home if you are sick. Visit [If You Are Sick: COVID-19](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html).
 - Follow testing recommendations for when they travel, have COVID-19 symptoms, or are exposed to COVID-19. Visit [COVID-19 Testing](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html) for information about who should get tested and how to get a test.
 - Work from home if possible. Employers must provide reasonable accommodations as required under existing federal and state law. Employers are strongly encouraged to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with one or more members of their household who have underlying medical conditions and who are unable to be vaccinated.

Key Requirements for Gyms, Studios, and Fitness Centers

- ✓ Limits on numbers of people allowed at one time in indoor facilities.
 - Indoor facilities must follow the requirements under “Managing Access and Occupancy”, including guidance on how to determine the maximum occupancy for the facility.
 - The occupancy of all indoor spaces within gymnasiums, fitness centers, recreation centers, sports facilities, climbing facilities, exercise facilities, martial arts facilities, and dance and exercise studios must be further limited to ensure required social distancing can be maintained between all people at all times.

GYMS, STUDIOS, AND FITNESS CENTERS

- For example, if a facility's rated occupant capacity is 80 persons, but to maintain required social distancing only 15 people may be exercising in the facility at one time, the number of occupants must be limited to only 15 people even though 50% percent of the rated occupancy is 40 people.
- ✓ Youth and Adult Organized Sports activities must comply with the guidance for [Organized Sports on the Stay Safe Minnesota website \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/organized-sports.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/organized-sports.jsp). Gyms, fitness centers, sports facilities, and similar establishments hosting organized sports activities should monitor the Organized Sports page on the Stay Safe Minnesota website for changes to guidance on organized sports activities. All other sports activities (e.g., a pick-up game in a gymnasium) must be conducted in a way that guarantees 6 feet of social distancing is maintained between individuals.
- ✓ In-person group classes, sessions, and other activities ("classes") are not limited outdoors. Classes held indoors must adhere to the following criteria:
 - Each class must be held in a designated, separate, self-contained space that physically separates the group activities from all other activities at the facility.
 - Ensure class sizes—including all participants, instructors, and people in the class area—do not exceed 50 people.
 - Choose a room or area that has sufficient space for all people in the class to maintain 6 feet from others throughout the class.
 - Before, during, and after classes, all people within the class must maintain distancing of at least 6 feet from others. Individual areas for each person must be identified and demarcated in the class area to ensure social distance of at least 6 feet is maintained. Examples include taping the floor with 6 foot squares, providing stanchions or partitions, or pre-positioning mats. Physical contact between people is not permitted.
 - A reservation system must be established for each class.
 - Access into the class area must be restricted to members of the class with a reservation, or an instructor. Other people, including other workers, members, observers, or spectators are not permitted into the class area while the class is in progress.
 - Workers are permitted in the class area to film or facilitate remote or virtual classes, sessions, and activities, but must be included when determining the maximum number of people.
 - Virtual group classes, sessions, and other activities are strongly encouraged over in-person group classes, sessions, and other activities.
- ✓ Pools, hot-tubs, and similar facilities must follow the [COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Guidance: Requirements for Public Pools \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/poolreopen.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/poolreopen.pdf).
 - Occupants of indoor pools must be factored into the overall capacity of the facility.
 - All indoor saunas, steam-rooms, and similar indoor facilities must be closed.
- ✓ Locker Rooms: Locker rooms may be open and used if the following conditions are maintained. If the conditions below cannot be maintained, locker-rooms must be closed.

- Social distancing of at least 6 feet is maintained in between people at all times;
- Partitions are established, queuing is maintained, or seating is arranged to provide for required social distancing; and
- ✓ Social Distancing
 - Social distancing must be maintained between all persons in all indoor areas of the facility. Social distancing requirements apply to all people, including members of the same household.
 - Machines, equipment and stations (e.g., weight benches, treadmills, exercise bikes) must be arranged to ensure that the person(s) using station, machine, or equipment maintains at least 6 feet of distance from others at all times.
 - These social distancing requirements do not prevent a facility from allowing an adult to provide support to a person who, by reason of age, medical condition, or disability, needs assistance with activities (e.g., exercise, changing, using the restroom, etc.).
- ✓ Food and beverage service must comply with the requirements found in the COVID-19 Preparedness Plan: Requirements for Restaurants and Bars found on [Stay Safe Guidance for Restaurants and Bars \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/restaurants-bars.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/restaurants-bars.jsp).
- ✓ Plan Guidance requirements
 - To the extent businesses in gyms, studios, and fitness centers are operating activities that are allowed by EO 21-21, these facilities must follow requirements in the “COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Requirements Guidance for Gyms, Studios, and Fitness Centers” below unless revised or modified by the above provisions. If the requirements set out below have been revised or modified by the above provisions, the above provisions must be followed.

Definitions

Indoors

A space is “indoors” if the space is:

- Between the ground or other natural surface or a floor or similar surface and an overhead barrier, including but not limited to: a canopy, cap, awning, ceiling, roof, retractable barrier, or similar structure, whether opened or closed, and
- Bounded by a physical barrier, including but not limited to walls, partitions, retractable dividers, doorways, garage doors or windows, whether opened or closed, that cover more than 50% of the combined surface area of the vertical planes constituting the perimeter of the space.

Indoor spaces may be temporary or permanent, finished or unfinished. A physical barrier bounding a space may be made of natural and manufactured materials. A 0.011-gauge window screen with an 18 by 16 mesh count is not a barrier. Examples of spaces that are or can be indoor spaces include, but are not limited to, buildings, towers, stadiums, arenas, theaters, rotundas, domes, tents, pavilions, gazebos, igloos, trailers, and other enclosures.

Venue

A “venue” is a physical space or area used to perform activities or conduct events. A venue may be space or area that is public or private, indoors or outdoors, with defined or undefined perimeters and accessible with or without a cost to an attendee. A physical space or area is a venue if the actions, conduct, or decisions of a business or other entity, including an event organizer, result in members of the public assembling or gathering in a space or area for a common or collective activity or event.

Required Plan Sections

Follow the requirements included in the applicable [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp) and the following:

1. [Health screening](#)
2. [Managing Occupancy](#)
3. [Maintain social distance in indoor settings](#)
4. [Hand hygiene practices](#)
5. [Consumption of food and beverages](#)
6. [Cleaning and disinfecting](#)

Requirements and Recommendations

1. Health Screening

Requirements

- ✓ Establish and implement health screening for all people entering the business, entity, or venue, including workers, patrons, members, guests and visitors, and establish and implement procedures for addressing people who are potentially infectious.
 - Track attendance to account for the people who were present at the facility each day.
 - Require all people to review and respond to screening-survey questions upon arrival and check-in and verify that they are not potentially infectious.
 - People whose responses to a health screen indicate they are potentially infectious must be advised to immediately leave the location.

Recommendations

- If a business or entity is contacted by public health (Local Public Health, Minnesota Department of Health, etc.) regarding cases at the facility and concerns about transmission in the facility, it is strongly recommended that the business or entity inform its membership that there have been COVID-19 cases at the facility.
- Notification to members will instruct them to get tested should they develop symptoms, and not return to the business or entity while they are potentially infectious.

2. Managing Access and Occupancy

A Venue Occupancy Calculator and a COVID-19 Venue Capacity Guide are tools available to determine occupant capacity on the [Stay Safe Guidance for Entertainment and Meeting Venues webpage \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp).

Requirements

- ✓ **Occupant Capacity:** Unless otherwise expressly permitted under these requirements, businesses must reduce the occupant capacity for all indoor spaces within the entire facility to that which is necessary to allow for the required social distancing and required under the EO.
 - To calculate the permitted maximum occupancy for the facility, businesses must begin with the rated occupant capacity of the facility whenever required or established by applicable state or local authorities in accordance with established codes and requirements. A business may not use other metrics (e.g., average daily attendance) as a basis for determining rated occupant capacity unless expressly provided within this document. If a business is unsure of its rated occupant capacity, the business must consult with the applicable state or local authorities with jurisdiction.
- ✓ Occupancy of indoor spaces cannot exceed the maximum number of persons as determined by the following:
 - **Less than 500 persons:** If the rated occupant capacity of the entire facility is 500 persons or less, then the occupancy for the facility cannot exceed **50%** of the rated occupant capacity or **250** people at any time, whichever is less.
 - **Greater than 500 persons:** If the rated occupant capacity of the entire facility is greater than 500 persons, then the business must use the following calculation to determine the maximum occupancy for the entire facility:
 - Step 1: Start with the rated occupant capacity for the entire facility and subtract 500.
 - Step 2: Take the difference and multiply it by 15% (0.15).
 - Step 3: Take the number and add 250.
 - The resulting calculation is the maximum number of persons allowed within the indoor spaces of the facility at any given time.
 - EXAMPLE: An indoor fitness center maintains an occupant capacity of 3,000 members. The maximum capacity permitted is 625 members ($3,000 - 500 = 2,500$; $2,500 \times 0.15 = 375$; $250 + 375 = 625$).
- ✓ If the indoor space within a facility does not maintain a rated occupant capacity that is required or established by applicable state or local authorities (e.g., indoor field, indoor parking area), the business must use the following calculation to determine the occupant capacity allowed for the facility:
 - Step 1: Determine the total area (in square-feet) of indoor space within the facility that is accessible to, and may be occupied by, members while at the facility. Ensure all areas that

- are not accessible to members, including “worker only” areas (e.g., restricted areas, janitorial areas, offices) are not included in the total area.
- Step 2: Divide the total area by 113 (i.e., 113 square-feet per person).
 - The resulting calculation is the maximum number of people allowed for the facility.
- ✓ The number of workers for the business does not need to be included when considering occupant capacity for the purposes of these requirements.
 - ✓ Social Distancing Must Be Maintained Indoors: Under all circumstances, if the allowable number of people indoors creates congregation, congestion and bottle-necking that does not allow for proper social distancing and consistency with these requirements, the business must further reduce the number of people it allows to a level that achieves consistency with these requirements.
 - ✓ Managing Access: Businesses must monitor and manage the access and occupancy of the business to ensure the maximum occupancy is not exceeded.
 - Control access into the business to limit the number of people allowed inside the business at one time to ensure the facility remains at or below its allowable maximum occupancy.
 - Businesses must prevent uncontrolled access of people into the facility.
 - Limit access into the facility to only workers, trainers, instructors, and members.
 - ✓ Communication of Capacity: Businesses must ensure the maximum number of people allowed within the facility, as determined by the business’s compliance with these requirements and the relevant Executive Orders, is expressly stated in the written COVID-19 Preparedness Plan for the business, as well as all rated occupant capacities, social distancing calculations, and other factors used to derive the capacity used by the business.

Recommendations

- Encourage outdoor classes and activities whenever possible.
- Encourage people to use online gym or fitness services, particularly if the people are of higher risk for severe COVID-19 complications.
- Establish specific hours for admittance for people at higher risk for severe COVID-19 complications.

3. Social Distancing

Requirements

- ✓ Implement a process to manage the number of people inside the facility to maintain required social distancing within all indoor spaces, including restrooms and locker rooms, taking into consideration the number of people present, level of exertion for activities, and duration of individual activities.
- ✓ Implement and maintain required social distancing between individuals in indoor areas where people gather and provide queuing (e.g., signage, markings, barriers, paint, tape, flags) for social distancing.

- ✓ Evaluate indoor locations and activities to implement required social distancing of at least 6 feet.
 - Evaluate scheduling, size of rooms and areas, use of restrooms and locker rooms, number of members, level of exertion, duration of group classes and individual activities to allow for the required social distancing.
 - Evaluate the layout and configuration of equipment to allow for the required social distancing.
- ✓ Implement and maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet throughout all indoor spaces.
 - Ensure that workers and patrons are supervised to guarantee required social distancing practices are followed.
 - Social distancing of at least 6 feet must be maintained between people engaged in exercise or other activities involving physical activity. Space machines or stations to allow for social distancing.
- ✓ Personal Trainers: Personal trainers and workers assisting members with exercise must maintain the required social distancing of 6 feet whenever indoors.
- ✓ Eliminate congestion areas, bottlenecks and choke points.
 - Establish one-way traffic flow for tracks, equipment circuits to the extent possible.
 - Use queuing (e.g., signage, physical markers) to direct one-way flow of traffic into, within, and out of the facility.
- ✓ These social distancing requirements do not prevent a facility from allowing an adult to provide support to a person who, by reason of age, medical condition, or disability, needs assistance with activities (e.g., exercise, changing, using the restroom, etc.).

Recommendations

- Offer planned “circuit-type” workouts that facilitate physical distancing and allow for cleaning and disinfecting of equipment during recovery between exercises or encourage members to use only one piece of equipment at a time (no circuits or super sets).
- Encourage members to pre-plan workout routines to avoid lingering and socializing.
- Consider limiting workout length to avoid unnecessary exposure and crowding and to allow the facility time for additional cleaning and disinfection.
- Offer activities outdoors, as opposed to indoors, whenever possible.
- Meetings: Businesses are strongly encouraged to hold meetings or trainings remotely/virtually whenever possible. In-person meetings and training sessions should be limited to as few workers as possible. Businesses are strongly encouraged to allow workers to attend meetings from home whenever possible.

4. Hand Hygiene Practices

Recommendations

- Provide additional hand washing facilities and hand sanitizer throughout the facility to encourage hand-washing and minimize crowding, congestion, and lines.

5. Consumption of food and beverages

Requirements

- ✓ Restrict eating and drinking.
 - When individuals consume food and beverages indoors, they must be seated in an area designated for eating and drinking that is separated from where people are exercising or otherwise engaged in physical activity and ensures that people can maintain a social distance of at least 6 feet from others.
 - Food and beverage service must comply with the requirements applicable to [Restaurants and Bars \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safedining.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safedining.pdf).

6. Cleaning and Disinfecting

Requirements

- ✓ Disinfect each machine and piece of equipment, including but not limited to weight-benches, treadmills, cycles, ellipticals, step machines, weights and strength training equipment, portable mats, racquets, balls, between use by each person.
- ✓ Do not permit the sharing of equipment or items that are difficult to clean and disinfect between users (e.g., weight-lifting gloves).
- ✓ Train workers on how to clean and disinfect equipment and instruct workers to clean and disinfect equipment in accordance with cleaning and disinfection procedures in a timely manner.
- ✓ Provide supplies for people to clean and disinfect machines and equipment before and after exercising at each location, station, or piece of equipment.

Recommendations

- Minimize sharing of work stations, machinery, and equipment.
- Provide “needs cleaning” tags that people can access and place on machines and equipment after use.
- Encourage members to bring, provide, and use their own equipment whenever possible.