



**SECTOR SPECIFIC WORKPLACE SAFETY STANDARDS FOR
FITNESS CENTERS AND HEALTH CLUBS TO ADDRESS COVID-19
As of November 5, 2020**

Purpose

These workplace safety standards for Fitness Centers and Health Clubs, are posted in advance of their effective date to allow Fitness Centers and Health Clubs time to prepare to operate in compliance with these mandatory health and safety standards. Fitness Centers and Health Clubs remain subject to the previously-issued, October 14, 2020 safety standards until these revised workplace safety standards go into effect on November 6, 2020.

“Fitness Centers and Health Clubs” are defined as any fitness facility that provides access to and/or instruction of personal fitness training, including but not limited to fitness activities such as:

- a. Weight and resistance training
- b. Cross training
- c. Yoga
- d. Spin classes
- e. Boot camp training

Indoor and outdoor athletic facilities, such as those for gymnastics, tennis, and swimming (whether a standalone facility or part of a Fitness Center or Health Club) must follow the Youth and Adult Sports guidance and the Pools guidance, available on the [EEA Reopening Site](#).

These sector specific COVID-19 workplace safety standards for Fitness Centers and Health Clubs are issued to provide owners and operators of Fitness Centers and Health Club sites and workers at those businesses with instructions to help protect against the spread of COVID-19 as Fitness Centers and Health Clubs re-open.

These standards are minimum requirements only and are not exclusive or exhaustive. The public health data for disease prevention upon which these guidelines are based can and does change frequently, it is the responsibility of each Fitness Centers and Health Club to stay abreast of any updates to these requirements.

Facilities Permitted to Open to the Public by Community Status

	Status of Municipality	
Businesses	Step 1 of Phase 3	Step 2 of Phase 3
Fitness Centers and Health Clubs	Open, 40% Capacity	Open, 50% Capacity

These allowances are subject to additional limitations as detailed below.

Municipalities that qualify as “Lower Risk communities” as provided in COVID-19 Order No. 51 are advanced to Step 2 of Phase 3. All other municipalities remain in Step 1 of Phase 3 until public health data meets the “Lower Risk metric” as defined in COVID-19 Order No. 51.

Early Closure

In accordance with the [COVID-19 Order No. 53](#), Requiring Early Closing for Certain Businesses and Activities, Fitness Centers and Health Clubs must close to the public by 9:30 pm and may not re-open to the public before 5:00 am the following day (“mandatory closing period”). During this daily mandatory closing period, Fitness Centers and Health Clubs must not admit any customers, patrons, or members of the public. Fitness Centers and Health Clubs may permit employees to stay on premises during the mandatory closing period.

Standards for Responsible Fitness Centers and Health Clubs in Massachusetts

No activity in Fitness Centers and Health Clubs shall occur without meeting these sector specific COVID-19 workplace safety standards. These standards apply to all Fitness Centers and Health Clubs until rescinded or amended by the State. The operator of the Fitness Center or Health Club shall be responsible for meeting these standards. While these standards permit the operation of both indoor and outdoor fitness facilities, Fitness Centers and Health Clubs are strongly encouraged to offer outdoor classes / activities to reduce the risk of disease transmission.

The following workplace specific safety standards are organized around four distinct categories covering Social Distancing, Hygiene Protocols, Staffing and Operations, and Cleaning and Disinfecting.

I. Social Distancing and Capacity Limits

- Require face coverings for all workers and visitors, except where unsafe due to medical condition or disability, or when engaging in strenuous fitness activity in accordance with the rules below
- Customers wearing face coverings during fitness activity must maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet. If customers cannot wear a face covering during strenuous fitness activity, distancing of at least 14 feet must be maintained
- In Phase 3 Step 1, each facility must monitor visitor entries and exits, ensure social distancing, and limit occupancy at all times to:
 - 40% of the facility’s maximum permitted occupancy as documented in its occupancy permit on record with the municipal building department or other municipal record holder
 - Facilities for which no permitted occupancy limitation is on record may allow up to 8 persons per 1,000 square feet of accessible indoor or outdoor space
 - In any case, no enclosed space within the facility shall exceed occupancy of 8 persons per 1,000 square feet
- In Phase 3 Step 2, each facility must monitor visitor entries and exits, ensure social distancing, and limit occupancy at all times to:
 - 50% of the facility’s maximum permitted occupancy as documented in its occupancy permit on record with the municipal building department or other municipal record holder
 - Facilities for which no permitted occupancy limitation is on record may allow up to 10 persons per 1,000 square feet of accessible indoor or outdoor space
 - In any case, no enclosed space within the facility shall exceed occupancy of 10 persons per 1,000 square feet
- All occupancy counts and calculations shall include visitors, staff, and other workers
- Arrange all equipment (weights, machines, treadmills, bikes, etc.) so exercise areas are spaced

out at least 14 feet apart. If spacing of equipment is not possible, equipment must be blocked off or closed to maintain 14 feet of distancing. Spacing of machines may be adjusted to at least 6 feet apart if barriers are installed

- Consider installing plastic barriers between equipment where possible. Barriers must extend high enough to effectively block respiration from someone using the equipment. If barriers are installed, they must be cleaned regularly.
- In group fitness classes, 14 feet of physical distancing must be maintained between attendees at all times. If physical barriers are installed to separate group fitness equipment, 6 feet of physical distancing must be maintained
- Install visual markers (boundaries, walkways, signage, etc.) to encourage customers to remain at least 6 feet apart while moving throughout the space
- Establish directional pathways to manage visitor flow for foot traffic, to minimize contact (e.g., one-way entrance and exit to rooms, one-way pathways). Post clearly visible signage regarding these policies
- Consider establishing “workout zones” to encourage spacing of customers using free weights, dumbbells, etc.
- Stagger lunch and break times for workers, regulate the maximum number of people in one place and ensure at least 6 feet of physical distancing between workers
- Close or reconfigure common spaces and high-density areas of facilities where workers are likely to congregate (e.g., break rooms and eating areas) to allow 6 feet of physical distancing
- Close or reconfigure other common spaces where customers are likely to congregate or where social distancing is not possible, such as lobbies and waiting areas
- Install physical partitions in areas where physical distancing is not possible, such as service counters
- Contactless payment and sign-in methods are encouraged

II. Hygiene Protocols

- Ensure access to handwashing facilities on site, including soap and running water, and allow enough break time for workers to wash hands frequently; alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol may be used as an alternative
- Distribute hand sanitizer and disposable wipes abundantly throughout the space for workers and customers to disinfect their hands and equipment before and after use
- Place disposable wipes next to each piece of large equipment (such as treadmills, bikes, rowing machines) and next to each area containing smaller equipment (such as free weights)
- Require trainers to wash hands before and after each training session and sanitize frequently during each session
- All equipment must be sanitized between uses. No equipment shall be used by another customer or returned to the storage rack / container without being sanitized
- Encourage customers to use one piece of equipment at a time (e.g., limit circuit training or “super sets” with multiple pieces of equipment) in order to facilitate required sanitizing. Facilities must provide sanitization supplies at each piece of equipment in order for customers to clean in between each use
- If sanitation (or the monitoring thereof by employees) of any piece of equipment is not possible or practical, this equipment shall be closed off
- Encourage customers to use their own personal exercise equipment (such as spin shoes, jump ropes, yoga mats, etc.) when possible. If shared items are used, they must be sanitized in between each use

- Post visible signage throughout the site to remind workers and customers of hygiene and safety protocols
- Allow water fountains to be used as refill stations only, provided that social distancing can be maintained. Customers and workers should bring their own water bottles or purchase from the business. Customers are not to drink directly from the water fountain

III. Staffing and Operations

- Encourage outdoor exercise, classes, sessions, etc. where possible, so long as appropriate physical distancing is maintained at all times and any equipment used is sanitized after each use
- Personal trainers should maintain six feet of distance from clients to the extent possible and should minimize any prolonged close contact. Personal trainers must wear face coverings. Any equipment used during the personal training session must be sanitized after each use, or at the end of the session if the client was the only person who used the equipment during the session
- Provide training to workers on up-to-date safety information and precautions including hygiene and other measures aimed at reducing disease transmission, including:
 - Social distancing, hand-washing, proper use of face coverings
 - Self-screening at home, including temperature and symptom checks
 - Reinforcing that staff shall not come to work if sick
 - When to seek medical attention if symptoms become severe
 - Which underlying health conditions may make individuals more susceptible to contracting and suffering from a severe case of the virus
- Adjust workplace hours and shifts (working teams with different schedules or staggered arrival / departure) to minimize contact across workers and reduce congestion
- Require customers to sign up for classes in advance
- Facilities must screen workers at each shift by ensuring the following:
 - Worker is not experiencing any symptoms such as fever (100.0 and above) or chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, fatigue, headache, muscle/body aches, runny nose/congestion, new loss of taste or smell, or nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
 - Worker has not had “close contact” with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19. “Close contact” means living in the same household as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, caring for a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, being within 6 feet of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more, or coming in direct contact with secretions (e.g., sharing utensils, being coughed on) from a person who has tested positive for COVID-19
 - Worker has not been asked to self-isolate or quarantine by their doctor or a local public health official
 - Workers who fail to meet the above criteria must be sent home
- Maintain a log of workers and customers to support potential contact tracing (name, date, time, contact information)
- Limit employees to discrete work zones to minimize overlap where possible
- Close or limit waiting areas and, for class-based activities with distinct session times, ask customers to wait outside or in cars until 10 minutes prior to their class
- Schedule 30-minute windows between classes to allow for thorough cleaning and appropriate ventilation of the fitness room, and to discourage congestion
- Consider creating “shifts” for customers engaging in unstructured exercise (i.e., open weight rooms) by using a reservation system in order to enforce occupancy limits
- Clearly designate staff responsible for sanitizing, cleaning, and supervision during each shift
- Workers who are particularly high risk to COVID-19 according to the Centers for Disease Control

- (e.g., due to age or underlying conditions) are encouraged to stay home
- Encourage workers to self-identify symptoms or any close contact to a known or suspected COVID-19 case to the employer
 - Workers shall not appear for work or complete a shift if feeling ill
 - Encourage workers who test positive for COVID-19 to disclose to the workplace employer for purposes of cleaning / disinfecting and contact tracing. If the employer is notified of any positive case at the workplace, the employer must immediately notify the local Board of Health (LBOH) in the city or town where the workplace is located. Employers must assist the LBOH with contact tracing efforts, including advising likely contacts to isolate and self-quarantine. Testing of other workers may be recommended consistent with CDC or DPH guidance and / or at the request of the LBOH
 - Post notice to workers and visitors of important health information and relevant safety measures as outlined in the Commonwealth's [Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplace](#)
 - Close or mark lockers to enforce 6 feet social distancing, especially in locker rooms. Lockers should be sanitized after each use. Gyms should provide sanitizing wipes near the lockers or in the locker room
 - Individual and communal shower areas may open but should be limited to 50% capacity. Social distancing of at least 6 feet is required for all individuals in shower and locker room areas. Showers that accompany pools may follow guidance for pools located on the [Reopening Website](#)
 - Consider setting aside specific hours of operation exclusively for vulnerable populations
 - Require that towels be stored in clearly labeled (clean vs. soiled) sanitary containers. Appropriate temperatures shall be used when washing and drying towels. Employees must wear proper protective equipment (gloves and face covering) while handling towels. Towels should not be shaken out
 - Operations of related services may be allowed to open and must follow sector-specific safety protocols for each setting. Some examples include:
 - In-facility child-care: Must follow child-care guidance
 - Food services: Must follow restaurant guidance
 - Pools: Must follow pool guidance
 - Athletic facilities (e.g., tennis courts): Must follow adult and youth sports guidance
 - Massage: Must follow close contact personal services guidance
 - Saunas, hot-tubs, and steam rooms: May not open before Phase 4
 - Fans should not be used indoors and should only be used for outdoor classes if directed away from other customers
 - For indoor and outdoor sports guidance, please refer to the [EEA Reopening Site](#)

IV. Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Clean commonly touched surfaces in restrooms (e.g., toilet seats, doorknobs, stall handles, sinks, paper towel dispensers, soap dispensers) frequently and in accordance with CDC guidelines
- Conduct frequent cleaning and disinfection of site (at least daily, and more frequently if feasible)
- Keep cleaning logs that include date, time, and scope of cleaning
- Conduct frequent disinfecting of heavily transited areas and high-touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, handrails, equipment, etc.)
- In the event of a positive case of a worker, shut down site for a deep cleaning and disinfecting of the workplace in accordance with current CDC guidance

- Open windows and doors to increase airflow where possible
- Disinfect all fitness equipment or mutually-touched objects (e.g., spin shoes, jump ropes, dumbbells, etc.) immediately after each use. At no point should customers come in contact with objects that others have touched without first being disinfected according to CDC guidelines

Additional worker safety guidelines and resources (with hyperlinks to web pages) are available below:

U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA):

[OSHA – COVID-19 Webpage](#)

[OSHA – Enforcement Guidelines Webpage](#)

[OSHA Fact Sheet – Protecting Workers During a Pandemic](#)

U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

[CDC – Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations](#)

[CDC – Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease \(Updated 3/21/20\)](#)

Additional Information:

Massachusetts State Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website

[mass.gov/covid19](https://www.mass.gov/covid19)

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>