



Gym and Fitness Center Reopening Plan

Purpose:

New York State Fitness Alliance, composed of Gym and Fitness Center owners and operators across New York, have created minimum standard industry guidelines and protocols for gyms and fitness centers to safely resume business operations. When permitted to reopen, these businesses will rehire thousands of employees across all regions of the State and continue to advance their mission to improve the health and well-being of their members. They are uniquely positioned to help the physical and mental recovery of communities they serve.

These businesses play a critical role in the fight against chronic disease including diabetes, heart disease, hyper-tension and obesity. Gyms and fitness centers help their members maintain a healthy lifestyle which is important for both physical and mental health. The services provided by gyms and fitness centers are a recognized extension of the health care system, with many insurance carriers providing reimbursement for gym memberships.

As the Governor deems regions to be safe for re-opening, the following protocols for each function of our industry, in addition to long established health and safety protocols, will maximize the safety of our members while promoting long term health and fitness.

Safety Protocols:

Employees:

- Institute a safety training program and require employee participation in the program prior to reopening. This training should be conducted virtually as practicable;
- Conduct a safety briefing at the beginning of each shift to re-emphasize the protective measures employees and members must follow;
- At minimum, conduct employee screening before start of each shift to determine whether the worker or vendor has had:
 1. COVID-19 symptoms in the past 14 days;
 2. Positive COVID-19 test in the past 14 days and/or;
 3. Close contact with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case in the past 12 days.
- Gym and Fitness Center employees, contractors and any third-party vendors must wear facial coverings at all times. Acceptable face coverings include but are not limited to cloth, surgical masks, N95 respirators, and face shields;
- Proper social distancing guidelines of six-feet must be observed by employees at all times;
- Prohibit handshaking and all other person-to-person contact;

- Gloves must be worn by employees when engaging in responsibilities that require Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including housekeeping and public area attendants in direct contact with members;
- Any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), must be changed or laundered after each shift;
- Hands must be washed or sanitized regularly and after any of the following activities: between clients or group fitness classes, using the restroom, sneezing, touching the face, blowing the nose, cleaning, sweeping, mopping, eating, drinking, returning from a break period and at the beginning and end of a designated shift;
- Assign a dedicated staff member ((i.e.), a safety officer) to be present at all times during normal business hours to monitor social distancing and compliance with protective actions, and to prompt other staff and members about social distancing, hand hygiene, face coverings and equipment sanitation;
- Employee breaks should be staggered to the best of the gym/fitness center's ability;
- Employee break rooms must be disinfected periodically throughout the day;
- Any employee/contractor who is not feeling well or showing signs of illness shall not come to work;
- If an employee or member of their household has COVID-19 they must notify the designated contact person at the Gym or Fitness Center and take CDC precautions;
- Should an employee contract COVID-19, proper CDC and NYS DOH policies and procedures must be adhered to regarding quarantine and return to work upon testing negative;
- If an employee is confirmed to have the coronavirus infection, employer should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to the coronavirus in the workplace but maintain confidentiality. Employees exposed to a co-worker with confirmed coronavirus should refer to CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure.

Members:

- Members must wear facial coverings when not engaged in exercise - provided that the member is over age of two and medically able to tolerate one;
- Proper social distancing guidelines of six-feet must be observed by members at all times. If social distancing is not possible members must wear facial coverings;
- Members must sanitize their hands upon entering the facility;
- Members will be checked in to the facility electronically, with no person-to-person contact;
- Avoid congregation in the entry area and develop a process to avoid congregating upon entry and exit;
- Decline entry to any member that exhibits signs of illness. Members must confirm prior to entry that they are not ill and have not had symptoms of COVID-19;
- Members must reserve spots in personal training, small group personal training and large group fitness classes prior to the beginning of each class;
- Information must be provided to members prior to them visiting explaining all procedures and protocols to be observed;
 - Member databases can be used to communicate all reopening, safety and sanitization protocols a gym or fitness center has adopted.
- Post clear signage that reinforces all policies including social distancing and sanitation protocols;

- Members shall be encouraged to come dressed and prepared for workout;
- Facilities may consider reserving operating hours dedicated to support their most vulnerable members, including the elderly and those with underlying health concerns.

Contact Tracing:

- Limit total facility capacity to no more than 50% of the maximum occupancy authorized by building and fire codes;
- Gyms and Fitness Centers are membership only facilities with member databases that will be used to aid NYS DOH with contact tracing;
 - Check-in protocols will ensure proper contact tracing, if necessary;
 - Existing customer management software enables gym and fitness centers to manage the number of members inside a building, including the ability to adhere to mandated occupancy and distancing requirements;
 - Existing customer management software enables scheduling and staggering of appointments and a list of members in a facility at a given time, can be provided upon request.

Reception Area:

- Maintain six-feet separation for proper social distancing at check-in;
- Plexiglass sneeze guards may be used at check in desk and point of sale;
- Install hand sanitation station for employee/member use at entry;
- Remove or mark seating to maintain social distancing and discourage congregation;
- Disinfect all hard, non-porous surfaces, reception counter, computer keyboard, phones, door handles, light switches, point-of-sale equipment and writing implements at the beginning of the day and every 60 minutes;
- Discard magazines and other non-essential items in the reception area that cannot be disinfected;
- Close any complimentary water or member refreshment stations;
- Place signage in windows to notify members of your diligence in practicing proper infection control;
- Place notice on entry doors reminding members that a face mask is required upon entering the gym/fitness center and must be worn when not engaged in exercise;
- Maintain foot traffic boundaries to avoid congregation upon entry or exit of the facility.

Locker Rooms:

- Signage approved by the CDC or NYS Department of Health to educate on proper hand-washing protocols must be in place;
- Floor markings to indicate appropriate six-foot social distancing leading to and in locker room areas;

- Sauna, steam rooms and hot tubs will be closed to members until deemed safe for use by the CDC and DOH;
- Shower use is permitted only for facilities providing private showers with doors and six-foot minimum social distancing between showers. If private showers with doors or proper distancing are not possible, showers must remain closed;
- For any towels, cloth wipes, or other laundered items that are used in the facility, follow [CDC](#) guidelines for those items. Provide a closed container where members can place used towels or other items. Ensure those items cannot be used again until properly laundered by a commercial laundering service or a laundering process which includes immersion in water of at least 160 degrees Fahrenheit for at least 25 minutes. Store all clean linens in a clean, covered place. Ensure employees who handle linens or laundry wear appropriate PPE (gloves and masks);
- Eliminate and shared locker room products including hair dryers, scales, cotton balls and q-tips;
- Markings should be affixed to all locker room benches to ensure six-foot social distancing;
- Close all lockers necessary to ensure appropriate six-foot social distancing;
- Shared restroom facilities and locker rooms must be cleaned regularly throughout the day using [EPA-registered disinfectants](#). High-touch surfaces such as faucets, toilets, doorknobs and light switches must be frequently cleaned and disinfected;
- Place a trash can near locker room door.

Water Fountains:

- Members will be required to bring their own water bottle and water fountain must be used to fill bottles only;
- Congregation at water bottle filling stations is to be prohibited;
- Water fountains will be sanitized every 60 minutes by employees.

Refreshment Bar/Café:

- Close self-serve stations or shared items including vending machines;
- Single-use cups for beverages only (no refills);
- Eliminate seating in café areas to discourage gatherings;
- Maintain take-out only refreshment service in accordance with Governor's [Food Services Guidelines for Employers and Employees](#).

Organized Fitness Instruction:

Personal Training

- Personal training sessions are conducted on a one-on-one basis;
- Personal training sessions that require physical contact are not allowed;

- Personal training sessions should be by appointment only and scheduled prior to the session;
- Scheduling should be accomplished electronically or by phone utilizing a reservation system prior to arrival;
- Trainers and members must wash or sanitize their hands before and after session;
- Proper social distancing guidelines of six-feet must be observed. Trainer must wear appropriate facial covering during training session;
- Equipment must be sanitized before and after use under staff observation;
- When practicable, conduct training sessions outdoors;
- All mats in fitness areas will be removed. Members are required to provide their own mat for use in the gym/fitness center.

Small Group Personal Training

- Trainers and members must wash or sanitize their hands before and after session;
- Small group training classes should be by appointment only and scheduled prior to the class;
- Scheduling should be accomplished electronically or by phone utilizing a reservation system prior to arrival;
- Ensure there is ample cleaning time between classes to properly sanitize and ventilate the room and its contents;
- Equipment must be sanitized before and after use under staff observation;
- Proper social distancing guidelines of six-feet between members must be observed;
- Trainer must wear appropriate facial covering during fitness session if social distancing is not possible;
- When practicable, conduct training sessions outdoors;
- All mats in fitness areas will be removed. Members are required to provide their own mat for use in the gym/fitness center.

Group Fitness

- Group fitness classes shall be conducted in accordance with the [Governor's New York State on PAUSE guidance for Public Gatherings](#) in phase four eligible regions permitting gatherings of up to 50 people;
- Trainers and members must wash or sanitize their hands before and after session;
- Group fitness classes should be by appointment only and scheduled prior to the class;
- Scheduling should be accomplished electronically or by phone utilizing a reservation system prior to arrival;
- Ensure there is ample cleaning time between classes to properly sanitize and ventilate the room and its contents;
- Equipment must be sanitized before and after use by member under staff observation;
- Proper social distancing guidelines of six-feet between members must be observed;
- Markings should be taped on the floor to indicate an area for each member;

- Trainer must wear appropriate facial covering during fitness session if social distancing is not possible;
- When practicable, conduct training sessions outdoors;
- All mats in fitness areas will be removed, members are required to provide their own mat for use in the gym/fitness center.

Independent Fitness Activities:

Cardio Decks

- Access to cardio training equipment will be restricted to maintain adequate six-feet social distancing between members (every other machine will be turned off, if necessary);
- Members are required to sanitize cardio training equipment before and after use with supplies provided by the facility;
- Nano Septic surfaces may be applied to main touch points on cardio training equipment.

Strength Training

- Members are required to maintain six-foot social distance while using the weight room;
- Markings should be taped on the floor to indicate an area for each member in any 'free weight' section;
- 'Spotting' in the weight room is permitted only when members are wearing appropriate facial coverings;
- Fitness machines, benches and weight-lifting equipment should be re-arranged to allow at least six feet of social distancing;
- Members must sanitize weight equipment before and after use with supplies provided by the facility.

Basketball

- Courts will be open for use; however, no basketballs will be left in the court areas;
- Employees will be responsible for checking-out all basketballs and sanitizing the balls upon return;
- Shooting only permitted on the courts - with six-foot social distancing policy in place for members;
- Group basketball games are prohibited.

Pool

- All indoor and outdoor swimming pools are subject to [New York State Sanitary Code](#);
- Members are required to maintain six-foot social distance while using the pool facility, unless they are members of the same household or family unit, or safety or the core activity requires a shorter distance, in accordance with [NYS DOH Guidance](#);
- Limit the number of members in each lap lane to two (swimming in opposite directions in the lane);
- Aquatics classes and swim lessons are permissible only if six-foot social distancing protocols can be safely maintained.

Personal Care Services:

- All personal care services including Massage Therapy and UV Tanning will be conducted in accordance with the Governor's [phase three guidance on personal care services](#).

Cleaning and Sanitation:

Gyms and Fitness Centers must adhere to [CDC](#) and [NYS Department of Health](#) cleaning and disinfecting recommendations/guidance at all times. Upon safe-reopening gyms and fitness centers should follow ongoing procedures for the protection of employees and members.

- Hand sanitizer stations or sanitizing wipe stations provided for member and employee use and restocked regularly;
- 'Cleaning stations' with hand sanitizer, cleaners, disinfectant and disposable towels for member and employee use throughout the facility; these stations will be re-stocked regularly;
 - Disinfectant must be EPA-registered and labeled as bactericidal, viricidal and fungicidal.
- Directional signage in place to keep the flow of people going in primarily one direction through the facility;
- Waste baskets must be made available throughout the facility for safe disposal of used sanitizing supplies;
- All fitness areas must be disinfected each morning before the facility opens in accordance with requirements set forth by the [CDC](#) and [DOH](#);
 - Cleaning log should be kept on site that documents date, time and scope of cleaning and disinfection;
 - For acceptable disinfectants, facilities should refer to DEC [products](#) identified by the EPA as effective against COVID-19.
- Employees must wipe down frequently used surfaces and equipment throughout the day wearing proper PPE, including:
 - Entryway doors, door handles and handicap push buttons;
 - Countertops, fitness floor areas, locker rooms and bathrooms;
 - Telephones, keypads, ATM keypad and point-of-sale devices;
 - Locker room and bathroom doors, handles, horizontal surfaces;

- Touch points on equipment including: free weights, kettle bells, TRX straps, cardio equipment.
- Cleaning products used must meet EPA guidelines and be approved for use and effective against viruses, bacteria, airborne and bloodborne pathogens;
- Sweat-absorbing personal equipment such as yoga or exercise mats should not be communal. Members should bring their own if required for training.

Ventilation:

- Increase air supply and ventilation;
 - Extended operation of ventilation systems: switch ventilation to nominal speed at least two hours before building usage time and switch to lower speed no sooner than two hours after building usage time in accordance with American Society of Heating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) business reopening recommendations;
 - Ventilation systems should run continuously even after building has closed, at a reduced speed in accordance with ASHRAE business reopening recommendations.
- Adjust mechanical ventilation system to bring in as much outside air as possible while maintaining appropriate air temperature for exercise;
- Ceiling fans should be adjusted so that fins are rotating in a direction that draws air up toward the ceiling rather than down onto members;
- Window fans should be turned to exhaust air out of the window in the direction of the outdoors;
- Keep doors and windows open where possible to increase ventilation;
- Operate locker room and bathroom fans continuously;
- Require service providers to perform proper cleaning procedures based EPA and CDC guidance;
 - Disinfect high touch areas of HVAC and othering building service systems such as on/off switches and thermostats.
- Air handling systems should be evaluated to see if they are able to accommodate MERV 13 filters. These filters should not be used if system was not designed as it causes reduced air flow and performance;
- Fitness facilities have always focused on efficient, safe and hygienic ventilation due to the nature of their business – uniquely positioning them to already have highly effective HVAC and filtrations systems.

It is important to note that the above guidelines and best practices are taken from a number of industry resources. These minimum guidelines may go above and beyond normal NYS health and safety standards, but those standards must still be met as required to maintain a safe environment.

For additional information, please contact William Lia, Executive Director, NYS Fitness Alliance, NYSfitnessalliance@gmail.com