



REOPENING GUIDANCE EXERCISE FACILITIES

Reopening safely and responsibly is vital for both the local economy and the well-being of our community. As exercise facilities reopen, there are important steps you can take to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in Harris County.

Recommendations Before Reopening

- Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation
- Conduct routine HVAC maintenance and change air filters
- Cleaning staff should [clean and disinfect](#) all areas including offices, bathrooms, and common areas, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces
 - Clean dirty surfaces with soap and water
 - Next, disinfect surfaces using [products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2](#), the virus that causes COVID-19, and that are appropriate for the surface
 - Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products for concentration, application method, contact time, and required personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Adjust class schedules to allow for deep cleaning between classes
- Complete martial arts and other contact activities without person-to-person contact
- Use floor tape or visual markers to ensure staff and customers are practicing social distancing of at least 6 ft
- Adjust equipment layout. Close or restrict access to equipment to maintain at least 6 ft of distance between equipment
- Temporarily close areas where customers or employees may congregate
- No self-service options (coffee bars, smoothie stations and other forms of communal food in facilities). Food retail should follow restaurant guidelines

Business Operations

- Restrict facility access to staffed hours only (i.e., any unmanned facilities must be manned) and limit facility occupancy to comply with [Governor Abbott's Executive Orders](#)
- Follow [CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfection](#) of high-touch surfaces, equipment and common areas
- Close showers, locker rooms, and lockers until further notice
- Only allow group fitness classes, if class can
 - Comply with capacity limits
 - Follow social distancing, 6 ft of distance between participants
 - No sharing of equipment during class

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Employee Protection

- Screen employees before entering the building for symptoms
- Consider reduced staffing requirements where possible
 - Stagger shifts, breaks and meals, in compliance with wage and hour laws and regulations, to maintain social distancing
- Prohibit gathering in break rooms or common areas. Limit the capacity of such areas to allow for safe social distancing (minimum of 6 ft whenever possible)
- Provide training on proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Encourage all employees to wear PPE and recommend that customers wear a face covering
- Ensure that there is enough staffing to follow enhanced sanitization and cleaning measures
- Employees should increase hygiene practices—wash hands more frequently, avoid touching face, practice good respiratory etiquette when coughing or sneezing
- All employees should stay home if feeling ill. Employees who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 (e.g., due to age or underlying conditions) are encouraged to stay home
- If tasks can be done remotely, allow employees to work from home as much as possible
- Direct any employee who shows COVID-19 symptoms to leave the premises immediately Seek medical care or COVID-19 testing. Employers should maintain the confidentiality of employee health information
- Plan for potential COVID-19 cases, and work with local health department officials when needed
- Covered employers and employees should be aware of the provisions of the federal [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#), which allows for paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave
- Update the Employee Illness Policy to include the symptoms of “COVID-19” or create a COVID-19 specific policy. All staff should sign the policy and given a copy
- Post extensive signage on health policies to help educate building occupants on COVID-19 best practices. Examples include:
 - [CDC Guidance to Stop the Spread of Germs](#)
 - [CDC Guidance on COVID-19 Symptoms](#)
 - [Consumer Protection](#)

Customer Protection

- Screen customers for illness upon entry to the gym:
 - Best practice: Temperature checks for every customer. Do not allow persons with temperatures above 100.4°F on to the premise
 - Minimum: Assess customers COVID-19 symptoms per the [Checklist of Gyms and Exercise Facilities](#)
- [Post signs](#) encouraging social distancing (visible to customers)
- Require that customers wash or sanitize their hands upon entering and leaving the facility.
- Require customers to use disinfecting wipes before and after using each piece of equipment
- Encourage customers to use only one piece of equipment at a time (i.e., no circuits or “super setting”) to allow cleaning of machines after each use
- Consider limiting workout length to avoid unnecessary exposure, decrease congestion, and allow for additional sanitization
- Recommend that persons more vulnerable or at-risk for COVID-19 (those who are over the age of 65 or those who have chronic medical conditions) take extra precaution or refrain from the use of the facility

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Planning for Absenteeism

- Determine how you will operate with a reduced staff if employees cannot work due to illness, staying home to care for sick family members and those who must stay home to watch their children
- Prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies
- Cross-train employees to perform essential functions, so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent

Free COVID-19 Testing is Available for Everyone

We encourage business owners and employees to get free testing at a testing site. The updated online self-assessment tool is confidential and designed to serve the public in the Greater Houston area. To register for testing, visit <http://covidcheck.hctx.net/>. For those who do not have access to the online tool, call **832-927-7575** to get scheduled for testing. Free testing is available regardless of citizenship status and for those who are uninsured.

Employees should **not** return to work if they are sick. If an employee has a sick family member they live with or has been near an ill person, they should notify their employer immediately.

Please go to www.hcphtx.org for any additional information on how to keep yourself or employees safe during this pandemic.

*People at higher risk for severe illness are those who are 65 or older, especially those with chronic lung disease; moderate to severe asthma; chronic heart disease; severe obesity; diabetes; chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis; liver disease; or weakened immune system.

Additional Information is Available

[The Governor's Report to Open Texas](#)
[CDC Business & Employer Resources](#)

CHECKLIST FOR MINIMUM RECOMMENDATIONS

Minimum Health Protocols for Your Facilities

- Space workout equipment to provide for at least 6 ft separation between patrons
- Regularly and frequently clean and disinfect any regularly touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, tables, chairs, and restrooms
- Disinfect any items that after customer contact
- Provide equipment cleaning products throughout the gym or exercise facility or class for use on equipment, including dead weights
- Make hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or similar disinfectant readily available to employees, contractors, and customers
- Place readily visible signage at the gym or exercise facility or class to remind everyone of best hygiene practices
- For facilities with more than 10 employees and/or contractors present at one time, consider having an individual exclusively or partially dedicated to ensuring the health protocols adopted by the facility are being successfully implemented and followed

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Minimum Health Protocols for Individuals

- Maintain at least 6 ft separation from other individuals not within the same household.
 - If such distancing is not feasible, other measures such as face covering, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, cleanliness, and sanitation should be rigorously practiced
- Self-screen before going into a gym or exercise facility or class for any of the following new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19:
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Chills
 - Repeated shaking with chills
 - Muscle pain
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - Loss of taste or smell
 - Diarrhea
 - Feeling feverish or measured temperature greater than $> 100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$
 - Known close contact with a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19
- Disinfect any equipment before and after use, including exercise machines and dead weights
- Wash or sanitize hands upon entering a gym, exercise facility or class.
- Wash or sanitize hands after any interaction with employees, other individuals, or items in the gym or exercise facility
- Wear gloves that fully cover hands from the wrist to the fingers while exercising
- If individuals bringing their personal equipment should disinfect it before and after use
- Consider wearing a face covering (over the nose and mouth) when entering a gym, exercise facility or class
- Consider wearing a face covering when within 6 ft of another person who is not a member of the individual's household. If available, individuals should consider wearing non-medical grade face masks
- Avoid contact within 6 ft with individuals aged 65 and older. Individuals aged 65 and older should stay at home as much as possible

Minimum Health Protocols for Your Employees and Contractors

- Train all employees and contractors on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette
- Screen employees and contractors before coming into the gym or exercise facility or class:
- Send home any employee or contractor who has any of the following new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19:
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Chills
 - Repeated shaking with chills
 - Muscle pain
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - Loss of taste or smell
 - Diarrhea
 - Feeling feverish or measured temperature greater than $> 100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$
 - Known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19
- Do not allow employees or contractors with new or worsening signs or symptoms listed above to return to work until:
 - If the employee or contractor **is diagnosed with COVID-19**, they may return to work when all three of the following criteria are met:
 - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared
 - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery (having no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications)
 - The individual has improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath)
 - If the employee or contractor has COVID-19 symptoms and does not get tested or evaluated by a medical professional, the individual **is assumed to have COVID-19**. The individual may not return to work until the individual has completed the same three-step criteria listed above

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Minimum Health Protocols for Your Employees and Contractors continued...

- If the employee or contractor has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to work before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual ***must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual to return to work based on an alternative diagnosis***
- Do not allow an employee or contractor with known close contact to a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 to return to work until the end of the 14 day self-quarantine period from the last date of exposure (with an exception granted for healthcare workers and critical infrastructure workers)
- Have employees and contractors wash or sanitize their hands upon entering the gym or exercise facility
- Have employees and contractors maintain at least 6 ft separation from other individuals. If such distancing is not feasible, other measures such as face covering, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, cleanliness, and sanitation should be rigorously practiced
- If a gym or exercise facility or class provides a meal for employees and/or contractors, the gym or exercise facility is recommended to have the meal individually packed for each individual
- Consider having all employees and contractors wear cloth face coverings (over the nose and mouth). If available, employees should consider wearing non-medical grade face masks

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