Interim Guidance for Indoor Fitness Centers and Gyms Settings
(July 30, 2021)

Guidelines for Conducting Business:

Any scenario in which people gather together poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission. All organizations and programs that gather groups of people should create and implement a plan to minimize the opportunity for COVID-19 transmission. The guidance below will help indoor fitness centers, yoga studios, dance studios, martial arts centers, skating rinks (ice and non-ice), indoor playgrounds, and bowling alleys to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, we strongly encourage all employers to direct employees and customers to information Find Your Spot, Take Your Shot and encourage them to get vaccinated. For guidance on vaccinations, please refer to our Interim Guidance for Individuals Who Have Been Vaccinated Against COVID-19.

This guidance covers the following topics:
• Vaccination
• Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure
• Cloth Face Coverings
• Cleaning and Hygiene
• Monitoring for Symptoms
• Combatting Misinformation
• Water and Ventilation Systems
• Additional Resources

Vaccination
We strongly recommend all employers to direct employees and customers to information Find Your Spot, Take Your Shot and encourage them to get vaccinated. For guidance on vaccinations, please refer to our Interim Guidance for Individuals Who Have Been Vaccinated Against COVID-19 and Recommendations for Protecting Each Other.

It is strongly recommended that fitness centers and gyms:

☐ Require employees to report vaccination status.
☐ Require employees who are unvaccinated, or do not disclose vaccine status, participate in screening/testing programs.
Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure

Social distancing is a key tool we currently have to decrease the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing (“physical distancing”) means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. If you are not fully vaccinated, stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people; do not gather in groups; stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings.

It is recommended that fitness centers and gyms:

- Remind all employees, visitors and patrons to self-monitor and get tested if they have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Post signage at the main entrance that reminds people to stay six feet apart.
- NC DHHS Know Your Ws provides English, Spanish, Combined English and Spanish versions of the “Wait” flyer.
- For activities involving people spread out among fixed equipment or lanes, tape off or move the equipment, or restrict access to lanes, so that the people conducting the exercise activity are at least six (6) feet apart.
- For group classes or group activities, ensure that all people are spaced at least 6 feet apart.
- Mark 6 feet of spacing in lines at point of sale and in other high-traffic areas for customers.
- For people waiting to take their turn in the activity, space out any seating so that people can be socially distanced and stay 6 feet from each other.
- Encourage outdoor activity and classes if feasible.
- Close all areas of the fitness center or gym where social distancing cannot be maintained, such as saunas, steam rooms, and whirlpools.
- Utilize self-check-in or place barrier/partition between front desk staff and members.
- When sinks or showers are not 6 feet apart, consider limiting use to every other sink or shower so individuals can maintain social distance while using.
- Close all common seating areas, lounge areas, and other areas that promote individuals gathering in groups.
- Personal training services and fitness coaching should practice social distancing to the extent possible. When these services require physical contact between staff and participant, hands must be washed immediately prior to and following the service and cloth face coverings should be worn by both parties, and face to face contact should be minimal.
- Discontinue use of drinking directly from water fountains and provide disposable cups or labeled water bottles for individuals when using any water fountains. Touchless water filling stations may be used.
- Encourage people to bring their own skates, bowling balls, or bowling shoes, as appropriate.

Cloth Face Coverings

There is evidence that wearing a face covering can help reduce the spread of COVID-19, especially because people may be infected with the virus and not know it.

It is strongly recommended that fitness centers and gyms:

- Have all employees and patrons who are not fully vaccinated wear a face covering when they are indoors and maintain physical distance from other, unless the individual states that an exception applies.
It is recommended that fitness centers and gyms:

- Encourage all vaccinated employees and patrons wear face coverings when they are indoors and less than 6ft away from others, if they are in county of high or substantial levels of transmission as defined by the CDC.
- Post signage saying all employees and patrons should wear a face covering if they are in county of high or substantial levels of transmission as defined by the CDC. English: Option 1 | Option 2, Spanish: Option 1 | Option 2
- Provide disposable face coverings to customers to wear while in the establishment.
- Visit NC DHHS COVID-19 response site for more information about the face covering guidance and access sign templates that are available in English and Spanish.
- Provide cloth face coverings for employees and ask them to properly launder using hot water and a high heat dryer between uses.

Cleaning and Hygiene
Washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer reduces the spread of transmission.

It is recommended that fitness centers and gyms:
- Promote frequent use of hand washing and hand sanitizer for staff and individuals. Require handwashing of staff immediately upon reporting to work, after contact with individuals, after performing cleaning and disinfecting activities, and frequently throughout the day.
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) at the entrance, and any other areas throughout fitness center or gym as needed.
- Clean surfaces once a day, prioritizing high-touch surfaces. If there has been a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours, clean and disinfect the space using an EPA-approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19).
- Clean all shared equipment between users or provide cleaning materials with instructions for guests to clean equipment before and/or after use.
- Systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol) and assure soap and hand drying materials are available at all sinks.
- Provide tissues for proper cough and sneeze hygiene.
- If towel service is provided, soiled towels must be kept in closed containers, handled minimally by employees, and employees must wash hands immediately after handling soiled linens. Towels should be washed and dried on high heat.
- Provide materials for members to wipe and disinfect equipment before and after exercise at each location.
- Remove soft surfaces and items difficult to disinfect in lobbies and other areas to the extent possible.

Monitoring for Symptoms
Conducting regular screening for symptoms can help reduce exposure. Staff should be encouraged to self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath.
If they develop symptoms, they should notify their supervisor and stay home. More information on how to monitor for symptoms is available from the CDC.

It is recommended that fitness centers and gyms:

- Have a plan in place for immediately removing employees from work if symptoms develop. Employees who have symptoms when they arrive at work or become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home.
- Post signage at the main entrance requesting that people who have been symptomatic with fever and/or cough not enter, such as Know Your Ws/Stop if You Have Symptoms flyers (English - Color, Black & White; Spanish - Color, Black & White).
- Establish and enforce sick leave policies to prevent the spread of disease, including:
  - Enforcing employees staying home if sick.
  - Encouraging liberal use of sick leave policy.
  - Expanding paid leave policies to allow employees to stay home when sick.
- Per CDC guidelines, if an employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is presumed positive by a medical professional due to symptoms, the employee should be excluded from work until:
  - No fever for at least 24 hours since recovery (without the use of fever-reducing medicine AND
  - Other symptoms have improved (e.g., coughing, shortness of breath) AND
  - At least 10 days have passed since first symptoms

  *A test-based strategy is no longer recommended to discontinue isolation or precautions and employers should not require documentation of a negative test before allowing a worker to return.

- Per CDC guidelines, if an employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 but does not have symptoms, they should remain out of work until 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test, assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test.
- Require symptomatic employees to wear masks until leaving the facility. Cleaning and disinfecting procedure should be implemented by designated personnel following CDC guidelines once sick employee leaves.
- Provide employees with information on help lines to access information or other support in reference to COVID-19, e.g. 211 and Hope4NC Helpline (1-855-587-3463)

Combatting Misinformation
Help ensure that the information your staff is getting is coming directly from reliable resources. Use resources from a trusted source like the CDC or NCDHHS to promote behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19.

It is recommended that fitness centers and gyms:

- Make information available to staff about COVID-19 prevention and mitigation strategies, using methods like videos, webinars, or printed materials like FAQs. Some reliable sources include NC DHHS COVID-19, Know Your W’s: Wear, Wait, Wash, NC DHHS COVID-19 Latest Updates, NC DHHS COVID-19 Materials & Resources
- Put up signs and posters, such as those found Know Your Ws: Wear, Wait, Wash and those found Social Media Toolkit for COVID-19.
Water and Ventilation Systems
Reduced use of water and ventilations systems can pose their own health hazards. There is increased for Legionella and other from stagnant or standing water.

It is recommended that:
- Before reopening, follow the CDC's Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation to minimize the risk of diseases associated with water.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety or health risk to people using the facility. Maintain relative humidity at 40 to 60 percent.
  - For assistance with ventilation recommendations, please consult an HVAC professional and see ASHRAE updates for more information.
- Use portable High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filtration units.
- If fans, such as pedestal fans or hard-mounted fans are used, take steps to minimize air from fans blowing from one person directly at another individual. If fans are disabled or removed, employees and members should remain aware of, and take steps to prevent, heat-related illness.

Additional Resources
- NC DHHS: North Carolina COVID-19
- CDC: Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers
- CDC: Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility
- CDC: Reopening Guidance
- EPA: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2
- FDA: Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
- HHS/OSHA: Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

Staying apart brings us together. Protect your family and neighbors.

#StayStrongNC
Learn more at nc.gov/covid19.