

Phase III guidelines for gyms & fitness centers

About this guidance

In Phase III, gyms and fitness centers may continue operating in accordance with the following guidelines, the general business guidelines found on www.reopeningri.com and must also operate in accordance with the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) regulations [Safe Activities By Covered Entities During the COVID-19 Emergency](#) (216-RICR-50-15-7). If you have any questions about this guidance, please contact the Department of Business Regulation via the online form at <https://dbr.ri.gov/questioncomplaints/> or at 401.889.5550.

These guidelines are designed to reduce the risk of clients, employees, and all Rhode Islanders developing COVID-19. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, these guidelines must be followed closely. Keep in mind that these guidelines will be in effect during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, may be updated as necessary, and will be relaxed when safe to do so.

Phase III operations

Under Phase III of Rhode Island's reopening plan, gyms and fitness centers will continue to operate with restrictions in place to protect public health and safety.

All gyms and fitness centers:

- Activities where physical distancing cannot be easily, continuously, or measurably maintained are not permitted in Phase III except as discussed in the Close-Contact Activities section below.
- Reservations for members and attendees to sign up for classes or workout sessions in advance are strongly recommended (i.e. discourage "walk-ins"). It is suggested that businesses develop a digital or telephonic system that enables customers to schedule appointments in advance.
 - Gyms may also consider implementing an outdoor reservation station for taking walk-in customers. The outdoor reservation station may consist of the following elements: a plexiglass barrier (or similar material that separates staff from walk-in customers); demarcated 6 foot spacing for walk-in customers in line; limiting lines to 10 individuals at a time; and staffing lines to ensure that walk-in customers comply with physical distancing requirements.
- The collection of contact tracing information (name and phone number) for employees and gym attendees either before or upon entry to the gym or fitness center is required.
- Businesses must screen all entrants, including employees, visitors, and customers upon arrival to the gym or fitness center. It is recommended that businesses conduct such screenings verbally. Businesses may also consider using a client intake form or software such as a smartphone app to conduct such screenings. Screening is permitted to take place electronically or telephonically at the time of class reservation and must be reconfirmed at the point of entry into the gym. A [screening tool](#) is available at reopeningri.com.
- All communal areas, such as waiting areas, lobbies, and locker rooms may open at a capacity of 1 person per 100 square feet of space. These areas must have a written cleaning schedule and be supplied with cleaning materials and sanitizer.
- The use of communal showers is not permitted. The gym or fitness center should clearly post that such communal facilities remain closed until further notice. Single-occupancy showers are permitted

only where showers are sanitized between uses.

- Pools, whirlpools, saunas, and steam rooms may be operated and used in accordance with applicable regulations issued by the Rhode Island Department of Health.
- Outdoor activities are preferred. Open windows or doors when possible to improve ventilation in indoor spaces. Increased use of HVAC is not recommended if outdoor airflow cannot be introduced.
- Gyms and fitness centers should consider implementing work-out “shifts” in which individuals sign up for designated times to exercise. It is encouraged to build cohorts that remain consistent (i.e. the same set of people work out together each time).
- There must be adequate time between classes or sessions (e.g. 30 minutes) to thoroughly clean the equipment and exercise space. Cleaning should be conducted in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance.
- No mutual contact on equipment is permitted without thorough sanitation in-between uses. Shared equipment (including machines, free weights, and other equipment) must be cleaned between individual clients’ uses. If such frequent and careful cleaning practices are not practical (that is, if sanitization between users cannot be ensured and monitored by staff), the gym or fitness center may need to close off weight training areas or otherwise prevent such equipment from use. Alternatively, individuals may provide and use their own personal equipment (e.g. dumbbells, yoga mat, jump rope etc.).
- It is required to provide hand-sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol and disposable wipes for individuals to clean their hands and to clean equipment before and after usage.
- High-touch surfaces and shared objects must be cleaned in accordance with the general business and organization guidance document available at: www.reopeningri.com.
- It is encouraged for gyms and fitness centers to hold hours exclusively for vulnerable populations (or otherwise provide accommodations for these populations).
- Use of water-fountains and filling stations is not permitted.
- Individuals must keep 6 feet physical distance from others at all times. Exercise equipment including cardio equipment must be at least 6’ apart. Greater distance (e.g. 14’) is preferred. If exercise machines cannot be moved to space them at least 6 feet apart, they should be blocked off (e.g., with every other piece of equipment blocked off and prevented from use with tape or another method) to ensure customers can maintain physical distancing of 6 feet or more.
- It is required to have demarcations demonstrating 6’ physical distancing between equipment and walkable pathways (preferably one-way paths) in workout areas.
- Patrons are encouraged to bring their own equipment when possible (e.g. dumbbells, yoga mats, jump rope).

Small-group fitness classes (e.g. yoga, cross-fit, & spin classes):

- It is encouraged to build cohorts that remain consistent (i.e. the same individuals attend the same class, so that attendees are not with different individuals each class).
- In a class setting, capacity is limited to the number of persons who can maintain physical distancing, or fourteen feet (14’) of distance if not wearing a mask, in the space where the class is taking place. Physical distancing requirements must be enforced. The smaller the group size, the lower the risk.
- Instructors must adhere to physical distancing guidelines through the duration of the class.

For unstructured, open gym settings:

- Capacity is limited to 1 person per every 100 square foot.
- It is recommended that businesses designate staff members to provide sanitizing, cleaning, and

supervision with a focus on high-touch objects during each shift.

Close-contact activity:

- Businesses and participants are reminded that any activity in which sustained contact is involved presents a higher-risk for transmission of COVID-19 than those where physical distance can be maintained.
- Participants in close-contact activity (e.g., soccer, basketball, football) should focus on practice and drills. Close-contact sports include those sports or activities where it is difficult to routinely maintain six feet of physical distance. Participants in close-contact sports should not participate in games with in-state or out-of-state teams.
- In settings where close contact is a fundamental part of the activity (e.g. ballroom dancing, boxing, jiu-jitsu) it is recommended that gyms or fitness centers set up consistent pairs of partners who train together for the duration of Phase III, when possible. In any case, training partners are not to change during a single day. Partners must wear masks throughout the contact and activity.

Outdoor fitness:

- Outdoor fitness that can guarantee physical distancing throughout is permitted and encouraged.
- For outdoor group fitness, capacity is limited to 1 person per every 100 square feet. All physical distancing guidelines must be followed.

Youth and adult sports: Youth and adult sports must follow the Youth & Adult Sport guidance available at reopeningri.com

Masks or face coverings during fitness activity:

- The use of masks is required in these settings (indoors and outdoors) in alignment with RIDOH Regulations which indicate that masks must be worn unless 6 feet of physical distancing can be maintained easily and continuously. However, if patrons are engaged in vigorous fitness activities without masks, the physical distance between patrons must be increased to 14 feet, as respiratory droplets can spread further during strenuous exercise.
 - If a gym or fitness center installs a solid, nonporous (e.g. plexiglass) barrier (or similar material that separates patrons) between individuals exercising that exceeds the individuals' height, the distance between individuals engaging in vigorous activity without a mask may be reduced.
- When exercising with a mask or face covering, please consider that masks that are made of moisture wicking, breathable materials (e.g. polypropylene, polyester) are available on the market. A buff – a type of tubular facial covering – built of thin, synthetic fabrics designed to reduce heat buildup is one common example. The fitness industry has provided guidance on the subject of materials for masks for use when exercising:
 - American Trail Runners Association: <https://trailrunner.com/trail-news/atra-member-leslie-jordan-inc-unveils-face-masks-and-race-wraps/>
 - Consumer Reports: <https://www.consumerreports.org/coronavirus/how-to-choose-and-wear-a-mask-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>
 - Chemical and Engineering News: <https://cen.acs.org/biological-chemistry/infectious-disease/best-material-homemade-coronavirus-face/98/web/2020/04>

Miscellaneous services: Additional, miscellaneous services that some gym and fitness centers may offer (e.g. massage, retail, or food service) must comply with the appropriate setting specific guidance available at: www.reopeningri.com.