



# Interim Guidance for Public Pools and Spas (May 22, 2020)

Governor Cooper has implemented a [three-phased approach](#) to slowly lift restrictions while combatting COVID-19, protecting North Carolinians and working together to recover the economy.

Starting at 5pm on Friday May 22, 2020, North Carolina will begin Phase 2. Businesses and organizations should follow the guidelines below to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

**Guidelines for Public Pools and Spas:** Any place where people gather poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission. Operators of public pools and spas should create and implement a plan to minimize that risk. The guidance below will help operators of public pools and spas reduce the spread of COVID-19 in their communities.

**Guidelines for Conducting Business:** Any scenario in which many people gather together poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission. Public pools include municipal, school, hotel, motel, apartment, boarding house, athletic club, or other membership facility pools and spas, which are also called hot tubs or jacuzzies. All public pools and spas where groups of people gather should create and implement a plan to minimize the opportunity for COVID-19 transmission at their facility. The guidance below will help public pools and spas reduce the spread of COVID-19 in their communities. This guidance is intended to address risk related specifically to the pool and dressing room/locker room. Any additional attractions related to the pool area such as playground, snack bar, or fitness center should consult other issued guidance as appropriate.

## **This guidance covers the following topics:**

- Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure
- Cloth Face Coverings
- Cleaning and Hygiene
- Monitoring for Symptoms
- Protecting Vulnerable Populations
- Combatting Misinformation
- Water and Ventilation Systems
- Additional Resources

## **Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure**

[Social distancing](#) is one of the only weapons we have to decrease the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing (“physical distancing”) means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. 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. Phase 2 includes several requirements and recommendations to support social distancing in spaces where the public may gather.

## NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Public pools and spas are **required** to:

- Limit the user capacity in the pool to no more than 50% of maximum occupancy as determined by fire code (when fire code number is not known, maximum occupancy can be calculated as 33 people per 1,000 square feet in deck areas, wading pools and splash pads), AND a maximum occupancy in the water of 10 people per 1,000 square feet, AND ensure sufficient social distancing with at least 6-foot separation between family units.
- Post the reduced “Emergency Maximum Capacity” of both the pool enclosure and the water in a noticeable place. [Sign templates](#) are available in English and Spanish on NC DHHS COVID-19 response site.
- Post signage reminding people about social distancing (staying at least 6 feet away from others). [Know Your Ws](#) sign templates are available in English and Spanish on NC DHHS COVID-19 response site.

It is recommended that public pools and spas:

- Have all chairs and lounges designated for use spaced at least 6 feet apart; unless the patrons are a family unit from the same household. Pool decks should be marked so chairs and lounges can be maintained at proper distances and extra seating should be removed from the deck.
- Provide marks on the floors of restrooms and locker rooms to indicate proper social distancing. When sinks are not 6 feet apart, consider limiting use to every other sink. If possible, designate entrance and exit doors for restrooms and locker rooms so occupants do not come face to face.
- Discontinue the use of shared tables among non-family units.
- Limit the use to one swimmer per lane when swim lanes are provided. When a swim coach is present and providing lessons, coaching, or overseeing a swim practice, swimmers per lane can be increased from one per lane to two. Social distancing must still be practiced to the extent possible within the swim lane.
- Mark off a six-foot perimeter around lifeguard chairs when deck space allows.
- Designate an Entrance and Exit location when there are 2 or more entrances into the pool area. Provide a designated area with social distancing markings for guests waiting to enter the pool area.
- Provide lifeguards with pocket masks to eliminate mouth to mouth contact in case resuscitation is needed.
- Advise lifeguards and maintenance staff to stay 6 feet away from patrons to the extent possible.
- Advise employees to stay 6 feet away from each other to the extent possible.
- Stagger swimming times or cohort family units to the extent possible by using reservation systems or other methods; rotate or stagger shifts to limit the number of employees in the pool area at the same time.
- Schedule activities so there is adequate space in the pool, allow sign-up by phone or online.
- Install plexiglass barriers when gate attendants are needed. If this is not possible, cloth face coverings are recommended.
- Remove pool toys, shared exercise equipment and other items from the pool area.
- Continue to offer contactless entry options, use phone app technology to alert patrons when the pool area is available based on schedule or occupancy.

## Cloth Face Coverings

It is strongly recommended that all employees wear a cloth face covering when they may be near (less than 6 feet from) other people. Patrons are also strongly encouraged to wear cloth face coverings when entering and exiting the pool area and when not in the pool. A FAQ about face coverings is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

- It is encouraged that businesses provide cloth face coverings for employees and patrons. If provided, they must be single use or properly laundered using hot water and a high heat dryer between uses.
- Please share guidance to employees on use, wearing, and removal of cloth face coverings, such as [CDC's guidance on wearing and removing cloth face masks](#), [CDC's use of cloth face coverings](#), and [CDC's cloth face coverings FAQ's](#).

## Cleaning and Hygiene

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

Public pools and spas are **required** to:

- Perform ongoing and routine environmental cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas (e.g., doors, doorknobs, rails) with an [EPA approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2](#) (the virus that causes COVID-19), and increase disinfection during peak times or high customer density times.

It is recommended that public pools and spas:

- Systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol) and assure soap and hand drying materials are at sinks.
- Provide, whenever available, hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) at the entrance and other areas.
- Require employees wash their hands or use hand sanitizer immediately upon reporting to work and frequently throughout the day.
- Disinfect tables, chairs and lounges between use, allowing the disinfectant to sit for the necessary contact time recommended by the manufacturer.
- Provide disinfectant wipes and/or solution and disposable towels and post disinfectant use instructions at pools where no employees are present.
- Close snack bars unless food service guidance can be followed.
- Provide tissues and trash containers 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.

## Monitoring for Symptoms

Conducting regular screening for symptoms can help reduce exposure. Employees 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.

## NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Public pools and spas are **required** to:

- Conduct daily [symptom](#) screening (standard interview questionnaire [English](#) | [Spanish](#)) of employees at entrance to workplace with immediately sending symptomatic workers home to [isolate](#).
- 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](#)).

It is recommended that public pools and spas:

- Have a plan in place for immediately removing employees from work if symptoms develop.
- 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 72 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
- [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)

### Protecting Vulnerable Populations

Information on who is at higher risk for severe disease is available from the [CDC](#) and [NC DHHS](#).

It is recommended that public pools and spas:

- Designate a specific time for persons at higher risk to access the pool without the general population (such as early morning, or late afternoon).
- Enable staff to self-identify as high risk for severe disease and reassign work to minimize their contact with customers and other employees.

### Combatting Misinformation

Help ensure that the information your employees get 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 public pools and spas:

- ❑ Make information available to workers 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 Ws: Wear, Wait, Wash](#), [NC DHHS COVID-19 Latest Updates](#), [NC DHHS COVID-19 Materials & Resources](#)
- ❑ Put up signs and posters, such as [Know Your Ws: Wear, Wait, Wash](#) and those found in the [Social Media Toolkit for COVID-19](#).

## Water and Ventilation Systems

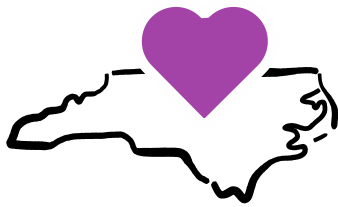
Reduced use of water and ventilations systems can pose their own health hazards. There is increased risk for Legionella and other waterborne pathogens from stagnant or standing water.

Before reopening, it is recommended that:

- ❑ 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.

## 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](#)



**#StayStrongNC**

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

**Learn more at [nc.gov/covid19](https://nc.gov/covid19).**



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