

## Pools Reopening after Closure from COVID-19

While WEDC recently provided some [reopen guidance for businesses](#), Public Health Madison & Dane County (Public Health) also has a [reopening toolkit](#) for businesses that operators may find helpful.

We also wanted to provide pool operators with additional industry specific information and recommendations specific on how swimming pools, whirlpools and spas can reopen in a safe manner that reduces the spread of COVID-19. While each aquatic venue is unique in its layout, size, seating, amenities, etc., there are many recommendations that are universal to all. The intent is to help pool operators to start planning for possible scenarios and future requirements. It is recommended that operators consult a qualified pool professional for technical advice or safety concerns.

[According to the CDC](#), there is no evidence that the virus that causes COVID-19 can be spread to people through the water in pools, hot tubs, spas, or water play areas. Proper operation and maintenance (including disinfection with chlorine and bromine) of these facilities should inactivate the virus in the water.

### Best Practice Recommendations

#### Social Distancing Requirements

The state [Orders](#) have requirements about social distancing for businesses currently open that include the following best practices:

- Do not use if you are sick with symptoms such as fever, cough or shortness of breath.
- Maintaining social distancing of six feet between people
- Washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds as frequently as possible or using hand sanitizer
- Covering coughs or sneezes (into the sleeve or elbow, not hands)
- Regularly cleaning high-touch surfaces
- Not shaking hands
- Following all other public health recommendations issued by DHS and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

To remind patrons about social distancing requirements post [signage](#) by all entrances and exits of pools, locker & changing rooms, restrooms, and showers on how to best practice social distancing.

### Determine Pool & Deck Capacity with Potential Capacity or Social Distancing Requirements

Capacity for any pools, whirlpools or spas at your facility should already be known. If it hasn't been determined or is unknown, the [Wisconsin State Code Chapter ATCP 76](#) outlines how to calculate patron loading based on the square footage.

Pool operators should start thinking about capacity if future Orders for reopening restrict capacity by a percent (e.g., 25% or 50%), by a specific number (e.g., 10, 50, 100 patrons) or by social distancing requirement of 6 feet between groups not from the same household. However, if no capacity limits are put in new orders, pool operators may still want to consider limiting the number of people allowed inside the pool area at any one time. This lowering of the number of people allowed at the pool will make it more likely for people to maintain minimum 6 feet distancing.

Pool users from the same household will not need to practice social distancing with each other but any capacity limits would still need to be enforced by an attendant.

For the pool deck, consider removing extra chairs from premise to ensure capacity is not exceeded and social distancing can be maintained. Space chairs accordingly to help with social distancing requirements.

### WEDC Guide to Reopening, Entertainment & Amusement

The [Wisconsin Economic Development Corp \(WEDC\) guide](#) provides some additional guidance for specific attractions:

#### **Competition pools or pool areas used for lap swimming** (with lanes seven to eight feet wide)

One patron per lane at a time is allowable for lap swimming or competition. Patrons are expected to swim in the middle of the lane to allow for maximum distance between heads (approximately seven feet).

#### **Wading pools and splash pads**

Wading pools and splash pads must be staffed by an attendant who is on site to monitor use. Maintain six feet of distance between people not from the same household group. Travel

routes through a splash pad must allow for six feet of distance, so patrons should be encouraged to take turns moving through the splash pad.

### **Municipal pools, fitness centers, school pools and all pools at waterparks**

There must be an adequate number of attendants on hand to ensure proper distancing and limit group sizes to 10 people or families.

### **Leisure Rivers**

Traffic in the river must allow for six feet of distancing between riders who are not members of the same family.

### **Slides**

Timing of sending riders down the slide must allow for only one person to be in the plunge basin at a time.

**Wave pools and other rides** that involve water moving patrons in a manner that may cause unavoidable close contact between patrons. Patron load must always be restricted to ensure adequate spacing during the activity.

### **Swimming lessons**

Follow “Learn to Swim” guidance from the American Red Cross. This is likely to mean that only lessons for more advanced swimmers or parent-child lessons will be allowable initially, in order to avoid close contact of non-family members.

## **How Can a Pool Operator Limit Capacity and Promote Social Distancing?**

Pool operators should consider limiting how long patrons can use the pool at each visit. By limiting how long patrons can stay at the pool more people will be able to use the pool each day and the risk for potential contact with someone positive with COVID-19 may be lessened.

If possible have a reservation system for households to sign up for blocks of time online, email, or text message to limit person to person contact.

Have an attendant, not a lifeguard required by code for staffing, posted at pool to monitor number of patrons. Pool staff can limit the number of people on a first-come first-served basis if no virtual reservation option is available.

Have reserved hours for immunocompromised and other designated groups.

If pool is located at a residential setting consider sending residents email, newsletter, or posting signage in common areas about social distancing requirements, capacity limits (if they exist), and how it will be enforced.

Ensure social distancing and capacity limits are also maintained during organized swim such as fitness classes and swimming lessons.

## Regular Upkeep, Maintenance and Testing of Pools and Spas During Closure

Balanced pool chemistry, testing, maintenance, and disinfection of pool is critical for preventing the spread of COVID-19. Performing scheduled maintenance and monitoring of your water chemistry is important even when your pool is not being used by patrons. At a minimum the following should be implemented so your pool will be ready to reopen when allowed:

- Establish a schedule for pool operator to test water chemistry. Consult our [Chemical Levels, Temperatures and Testing Frequency document](#) for testing guidance. The pool system is continually feeding disinfection. Consider more frequent water testing to ensure proper chemical levels are maintained.
- Record water testing results on a log. We have created a [Monthly Water Testing Log Sheet](#) template for operators. Review water chemistry log daily to catch potential problems sooner.
- Check the turnover rate of basins. Ensure that proper turnover rate meets [ATCP 76](#).
- As a preventative measure, change out all filter baskets to clean filter baskets.
- Skimmer baskets should also be checked for debris and cleaned.

## Schedule Regular Maintenance and Disinfecting of Pool and Common Areas

Establish a schedule for pool staff to disinfect high touch surfaces multiple times during the day. Clean high touch surfaces including:

- Door handles, gate latches, keyless entry readers, and lock boxes
- Handrails and pool ladders
- Restrooms (door handles, faucets, sinks, toilets, towel dispensers, baby changing stations, light switches)
- Water fountains
- Emergency telephones and first aid kits

- Switches and emergency shut-off buttons on spas

The CDC has guidelines for [Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities](#).

## Pool Supplies and Activities

- Group games involving the use of balls, flotation devices, or other toys should be discouraged.
- Recommend patrons to bring their own towels. Consider providing towels to patrons of facility or hotel guests only upon request.

## Pool Furniture

Signs should be posted indicating that patrons should not move pool seating so that social distancing is maintained at all times. Pool operators may choose to not provide seating at this time. If choosing to use pool furniture, the areas should be marked where the furniture is to stay.

## Staffing, Employee Health, and Hygiene

- Staffing required by state law must be maintained. Lifeguards are not allowed to monitor the capacity and regulate social distancing as it may detract from their abilities to perform their assigned job duties.
- Develop an employee illness plan. The plan should address staff potential contact with COVID-19 while performing job duties and include Employee Illness Agreement form. We have developed an [Employee Illness Agreement form](#) that employers could use.
- Have employees wear masks when feasible. See [CDC Guidelines for the Use of Cloth Face Coverings](#) or [Cloth Face Covering Policy](#)
- Educate employees on proper handwashing. Post signs reminding staff and patrons when to wash hands. See [CDC for When and How to Wash Hands](#) guidance and also for [posters on handwashing](#).
- To promote handwashing, ensure all handwashing sinks are fully stocked with soap and single use towels.
- Additionally, provide hand sanitizer for patrons and staff.

## General Best Practice Recommendations

After long-term closure, it is important to ensure all other safety requirements of [ATCP 76](#) are being followed including:

- Checking that all emergency equipment (e.g. first aid kit, shepherds crook, blankets, etc) is available and accessible.
- Verifying emergency phone is operating.

Prior to opening to patrons, operators should consider laboratory testing of all pools, whirlpools, and spas if:

- Water has not been tested onsite at the frequency required by state code,
- Disinfection levels have not been properly maintained to prevent bacterial growth,
- Equipment was shutoff, or
- Any mechanical failure occurred during the period of non-use.
- When submitting samples to a laboratory for testing, it is recommended you test for the following: *Pseudomonas*, Coliform, and *E. coli*.

## Resources

- Washington State Department of Health [Guidance for Shutting Down and Reopening Water Recreation Facilities](#)
- Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Guidance on [Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19 in the Entertainment and Amusement Industries](#)
- Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) [Contact information](#)
- Public Health Madison and Dane County [Best Practices for Businesses](#)
- CDC Factsheet for [Pseudomonas](#)

## Seek an attorney's advice regarding ways to limit liability.

### This is a sample liability release, from the Boys and Girls Club of San Francisco:

By signing this agreement, I acknowledge the contagious nature of COVID-19 and voluntarily assume the risk that my family, including child(ren), and I may be exposed to or infected by COVID-19 while on site at the pool and that such exposure or infection may result in personal injury, illness, permanent disability, and death. I understand that the risk of becoming exposed to or infected by COVID-19 at the pool may result from the actions, omissions, or negligence of myself and others, including, but not limited to, the HOA Board and pool management company's employees, volunteers, and program participants and their families. I voluntarily agree to assume all of the foregoing risks and accept sole responsibility for any injury to my child(ren) or myself (including, but not limited to, personal injury, disability, and death), illness, damage, loss, claim, liability, or expense, of any kind, that I, my family and my child(ren) may experience or incur in connection with my child(ren)'s attendance at the pool or participation in pool activities ("Claims"). On my behalf, and on behalf of my children, I hereby release, covenant not to sue, discharge, and hold harmless the HOA Board and the pool management company and their employees, agents, and representatives, of and from the Claims, including all liabilities, claims, actions, damages, costs or expenses of any kind arising out of or relating thereto. I understand and agree that this release includes any Claims based on the actions, omissions, or negligence of the HOA Board and the pool management company and their employees, agents, and representatives, whether a COVID-19 infection occurs before, during, or after participation in pool facility activities.

### This is a potential template for signage with best practice recommendations only:

#### COVID-19 WARNING & POOL REQUIREMENTS

- The danger of exposure to the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 exists.
- Minors should be supervised in pool area.
- By entering the pool and related facilities, you are taking responsibility for your own protection. It is highly recommended that you disinfect your hands and anything you touch in the pool area.

- Do not use the pool if you have been sick in the past two weeks COVID-19 or GI tract symptoms.
- Maintain at least 6 feet between you and other people who are not a part of your household.
- Recommend wearing a cloth face covering when you are not in the swimming pool or shower.

**MAXIMUM OCCUPANCY IS RESTRICTED TO \_\_\_\_\_**