



# MANDATORY DIRECTIVE:



# Gyms and Fitness Facilities

**Effective July 13, 2020**

[sccgov.org/coronavirus](https://sccgov.org/coronavirus)

**County of Santa Clara**  
**Public Health Department**

Health Officer  
976 Lenzen Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
San José, CA 95126  
408.792.5040



**MANDATORY DIRECTIVE FOR GYMS AND FITNESS FACILITIES**

**\*Please confirm that your facility may open under the State Order. Where there is a difference between the local County Order and the State Order, the more restrictive order must be followed. The State also has specific guidance for certain facilities that must be followed in addition to this mandatory directive.\***

Information on the State's Order and State guidance is available at [covid19.ca.gov](https://covid19.ca.gov).

**Issued: July 14, 2020**  
**Updated: September 8, 2020**

*On August 28, 2020, the State released its Blueprint for a Safer Economy ("Blueprint"), a statewide system of COVID-19 restrictions. Santa Clara County is currently in Tier Two (Red) of the Blueprint.*

*Under the Blueprint, the State Health Officer requires all indoor operations at gyms and fitness centers to be limited to 10% capacity in all Tier Two counties, including Santa Clara County. See the Statewide Public Health Officer Order [here](#) and the State's Blueprint [here](#). Accordingly, these businesses must limit indoor capacity to 10% of normal (or to the capacity allowed by the County's Risk Reduction Order, whichever is stricter). All indoor and outdoor operations are subject to the mandatory requirements in this Directive.*

While gyms and fitness facilities provide important services that help people maintain their physical and emotional well-being, they also can pose significant risks to public health in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because they often involve heavy respiration and communal use of high-touch equipment in an indoor environment, gyms and fitness facilities must take extra precautions to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission for clients and staff. Gym and fitness activities are strongly urged to move activities and equipment outdoors wherever possible, given the current best evidence of much lower risk of COVID-19 transmission outdoors.

This Directive explains how gyms and fitness facilities may operate. **This Directive is mandatory, and failure to follow it is a violation of the Health Officer's Order issued on July 2, 2020 ("Order").** You must comply with the Order and all requirements of this Directive.

## *The Order Issued July 2*

The Order imposes several restrictions on all businesses and activities to ensure that the County stays as safe as possible, including but not limited to the following:

- **The Social Distancing Protocol:** All businesses must fill out and submit the newest version of the Social Distancing Protocol to the County using the online form, available [here](#). The Protocol is submitted under penalty of perjury, meaning that everything written on the form must be truthful and accurate to the best of the signer's knowledge, and submitting false information is a crime. The Protocol must be distributed to all workers, and it must be accessible to all officials who are enforcing the Order. Businesses are responsible for ensuring that workers understand and are trained on Protocol requirements in a language that they understand.
- **Signage:** All businesses must print (1) an updated COVID-19 PREPARED Sign and (2) a Social Distancing Protocol Visitor Information Sheet, and both must be posted prominently at all facility entrances. These are available for printing after submission of the Social Distancing Protocol online.
- **Face Coverings:** Everyone at a business facility or worksite must wear a face covering at all times (except very young children, people for whom face coverings are medically inadvisable, or for communication by or with people who are hearing impaired). **Face coverings must be worn even while exercising.** If an individual is uncomfortable or has any difficulty breathing while exercising with a face covering, the individual should immediately stop the activity.
- **Density Limitation:** All businesses must limit the number of people who may be at the facility at the same time. For staff members, the limit is 1 person per 250 gross square feet of indoor facility space (this means total space, including areas open only to staff like storage rooms). For clients, the limit is 1 person per 150 square feet of indoor space open to the public. The density requirements tell businesses how many people (staff or clients) they can let into their facility before another person leaves. Children under 12 who are accompanying a parent or guardian do not count against the limit, but everyone age 12 and over does.

See the [Order](#) and the [FAQ page](#) for more details.

In addition to these general requirements applicable to all businesses under the Order, all gyms and fitness facilities must comply with the following directives.

### *Areas/Amenities that Must Remain Closed*

The following areas/amenities must **remain closed**:

- Indoor pools (outdoor pools may operate but must follow the [Health Officer Directive for](#)

### Outdoor Pools)

- Spas, saunas, and steam rooms
- Showers
- Locker rooms (Note: Locker rooms may be open only to allow access to restroom areas; lockers, benches, and other locker room amenities must be closed)
- Water fountains (Note: No-touch water refill stations are allowed)
- Vending machines
- Seating, waiting, and lounge areas
- Microwaves, water coolers, and any other similar equipment in staff areas

Closed areas/amenities must be made inaccessible to clients by locking doors or using tape or other barriers to block off the area. At the entrance to each closed area and on each closed amenity, signage must be posted telling clients that the area/amenity is off-limits.

### ***Reservation and Check-In Procedures***

Gyms and fitness facilities must take the following steps to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission as clients enter their facilities:

- Implement a reservation system where clients sign up to work out during designated time slots. This will prevent bottlenecks at the entrance and ensure only the number of individuals allowed inside the facility are there at one time.
- Ensure everyone has a face covering before allowing them to enter the facility.
- Verbally screen all clients and other visitors as they enter the facility. (This screening is in addition to the employee screening required by the Social Distancing Protocol.)
  - Gyms and fitness facilities must ask everyone entering the facility if they:
    - have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days;
    - have come into close contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days;
    - feel or recently felt feverish;
    - have or recently had any other COVID-19 symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, tiredness,

chills, headaches, muscle/body aches, confusion, or loss of taste/smell.

- If a person answers “yes” to **any** of these questions, the gym or fitness facility must not allow the person to enter the facility. The person must be sent home and instructed to contact their healthcare provider.
- If feasible, equip the front desk area with plexiglass or other impermeable barriers.

### ***Indoor Cardio/Aerobic Exercise Prohibited***

Indoor activities or classes that involve cardio/aerobic exercise are prohibited. Cardio/aerobic exercise includes use of treadmills, elliptical machines, exercise bikes, and other similar equipment if used in a manner that induces heavy breathing or an elevated heartrate. It also includes indoor calisthenics, dancing, or other activities that induce heavy breathing and elevated heartrate, during which participants are likely to be inclined to remove their masks. These activities are allowed to occur outdoors only.

### ***Offer Activities and Services Outdoors As Much As Possible***

Gym and fitness facility operators are encouraged to maximize the number of services they offer outdoors, as the risk of transmission of COVID-19 is significantly less outdoors than indoors.

- For example, a personal trainer offering services to a client involving small free weights, cardio, and other activities should provide those training services outdoors if possible.

### ***Social Distancing Measures***

Gyms and fitness facilities must ensure that everyone in their facility maintains at least 6 feet of social distance from everyone outside their household at all times. To help accomplish this distancing, gyms and fitness facilities must:

- Reduce the amount of equipment available for use so that no piece of available equipment is within 6 feet of any other available piece of equipment.
  - For example, this may involve blocking off every other weight machine or moving equipment so that it is farther apart.
- Pieces of equipment that are moved during use (such as weight sleds or flipping tires) must have enough dedicated space that any client using them will remain at least 6 feet away from all clients at all times.
- For open floor spaces such as abdominal workout areas, free weight areas, and astroturf, designate separate zones for individual clients to use for workouts. Each zone must be at least 6 feet apart in all directions (front-to-back and side-to-side) from all other zones.
  - Zones may be designated by markings on the ground, barriers, or signage telling

clients where each zone is.

- Post signage throughout the facility reminding clients to stay at least 6 feet away from everyone outside their household at all times.
- If possible, offer remote fitness options on virtual platforms to reduce the number of clients who utilize the facility in person.

### *Sanitization Measures*

Gyms and fitness facilities must implement the following sanitization measures to minimize the risk of transmission at the facility:

- Regularly disinfect all high-touch areas and surfaces (such as doorknobs, handles, rails, light switches, sanitizing stations, restrooms, sinks, toilets, benches, front desk areas, keyboards, computers, phones, and all fitness equipment), following [CDC guidelines](#).
  - The disinfectants used to comply with this section of the directive must be effective against COVID-19. The CDC has provided a list of effective disinfectants [here](#).
  - Make sure that staff have enough ventilation (air flow) in areas where they are disinfecting. If they are cleaning in a bathroom or other small space, make sure that doors and windows are open.
- If necessary, modify operating hours to ensure time for regular and thorough sanitization.
- Make disinfectant spray and wipes available to clients (not just staff members) at sanitization stations throughout the facility. In addition, post signage requiring clients to spray and wipe down their stations and equipment before and after use.
- In addition to making hand sanitizer available to clients throughout the facility (as required in the Social Distancing Protocol), post signage requiring clients to use hand sanitizer or wash their hands (with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds) before and after using any equipment.
- Implement a checkout system for clients to use any small equipment and accessories (such as exercise bands, ropes, mats, or foam rollers). Develop a process to clean and disinfect these items between each use.
- For larger equipment like weight machines, either require each client to disinfect and wipe down equipment after they use it, or if they are unable or unwilling to do so, provide “ready to clean” tags for them to hang on their equipment when they are finished using it. These tags will alert staff that the equipment must be sanitized before the next client may use it.

### ***Group Fitness Classes***

Indoor group fitness classes may be held only if all of the following requirements are met. Outdoor group fitness classes can proceed if they follow the separate Health Officer Mandatory Directive for Gatherings.

- The class does not involve any cardio/aerobic exercise.
- The instructor and all participants wear face coverings at all times.
- Class attendance in an indoor group fitness area must be limited to 1 instructor/staff member per 250 square feet and 1 client per 150 square feet of the group fitness area.
- Markers must be placed on the ground to show each client's personal exercise zone. Each zone must be spaced so that all clients are at least 6 feet away from all other clients and from the instructor/staff member at all times. Clients must remain within their personal exercise zone for the duration of the class. Clients may not rotate between zones or to different stations, and no equipment may be shared between clients.
- Clients must pre-register through an online or other touch-free platform, if possible.
- All class equipment, as well as the group fitness area itself (if indoors), must be sanitized before and after each class.
- Doors and windows to indoor group fitness areas must be left open if safe to do so.
- Classes must be staggered so that there are at least 15 minutes between classes to allow for full sanitization and to prevent crowding from participants entering/exiting the area.
- Participants must be told to arrive at the group fitness area no more than 5 minutes before the start time for their class. When a class ends, the instructor must dismiss participants from the group fitness area in small groups to prevent crowding at the exits.
- Instructors must maximize verbal cueing/instruction/correction. Instructors may touch participants only when absolutely necessary for safety purposes, such as to prevent a participant from falling and injuring themselves. (Note: This requirement applies to personal trainers as well as group fitness instructors.)

### ***Contact Sports and Recreational Activities***

Sports and recreational activities that involve contact between participants are not allowed. However, if participants can engage in a modified version of these activities while maintaining at least 6 feet of social distance at all times, they may do so. For instance, a competitive basketball game is not allowed, but people may shoot baskets and conduct drills while maintaining social distance.

### *Food Facilities*

Any food facility located within a gym or fitness facility (such as a juice or snack bar) must follow the rules in the [Health Officer Directive for Food Facilities](#). Note that **indoor dining is not allowed** (but indoor food facilities may serve food for carryout or for clients to eat at an outdoor dining area operated in compliance with the [Health Officer Directives for Outdoor Dining, Wineries, and Outdoor Tasting Rooms](#)).

### *Other Steps Recommended by the Health Officer*

The following steps are not required, but they are strongly recommended by the Health Officer:

- Offering designated hours reserved exclusively for clients aged 50 and older.
- Upgrading the facility's HVAC system to improve airflow and filtration.
- Cleaning HVAC intakes and returns daily.
- Spacing out reservation time slots for individual workouts to allow time to sanitize the facility between the end of one slot and the beginning of the next.

### *Stay Informed*

For answers to frequently asked questions about this industry and other topics, please see the [FAQ page](#). **Please note that this directive may be updated.** For up-to-date information on the Health Officer Order, please visit the County Public Health Department's website at [www.sccgov.org/coronavirus](http://www.sccgov.org/coronavirus).