

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Deidre S. Gifford, MD, MPH  
Acting Commissioner



Ned Lamont  
Governor  
Susan Bysiewicz  
Lt. Governor

### DRINKING WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH BRANCH

EHS Circular Letter #2021-30

**TO:** Directors of Health  
Chief Sanitarians

**FROM:** Lori J. Mathieu  
Branch Chief, Environmental Health and Drinking Water Branch

Handwritten signature of Lori J. Mathieu '21.

**DATE:** April 19, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Guidance for Operating Public Pools during COVID-19

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In preparation for the 2021 swim season, the Department of Public Health (DPH), Recreation Program, is again issuing a guidance document to help minimize the spread of the COVID-19 virus in and around a public pool. The attached guidance should be followed if a public pool is open and operates during the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidance follows CDC's recommendations.

The DPH is asking local health departments/districts to please share this guidance document with all the public pools located in your jurisdiction. This document can also be found on the DPH/EnvironmentalHealth COVID-19 website at: <https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Environmental-Health/COVID19-ReopenConnecticut>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that proper operation, maintenance, and disinfection (e.g., with chlorine and bromine) of pools and hot tubs should remove or inactivate the virus that causes COVID-19 and therefore eliminate the risk of spread to humans through the water. However, individuals using a pool or hot tub (or surrounding deck areas) in close proximity to other people outside of their household are still at risk for virus that can be spread directly from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. As such, standard mitigation strategies including the use of masks when out of the water and maintaining distance from others when in or out of pools and hot tubs remain important to COVID-19 prevention.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Recreation Program at (860) 509-7334.

c: Heather Aaron, MPH, LNHA, Deputy Commissioner, DPH  
Jim Vannoy, Section Chief, Environmental Health Section, DPH



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### **The Purpose of these Guidelines is to MINIMIZE the Risk of the Spread of COVID-19**

### **In and Around the Use of a Public Pool**

**These Guidelines should be used in conjunction with any Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) Rules and Best Practices that pertain to public pools which can be found on the following website:**

<https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/Coronavirus-Business-Recovery/Sector-Rules-for-Reopen>

**It is the responsibility of the owner/operator of the public pool (pool) to make the decision if they can safely open and manage their public pool while adhering to the following Guidelines.**

#### Water Quality Requirement:

- Maintain a minimum free chlorine residual of 1.0 ppm (mg/L) in the pool at all times.
- Maintain a minimum bromine residual of 3.0 ppm (mg/L) in the pool at all times.
- Maintain a minimum free chlorine residual of 3.0 ppm (mg/L) in the spa at all times.

#### Social Distancing:

- Limit the total number of patrons in the pool area and pool to the number of people/households that can safely fit on the pool deck area while maintaining the six feet social distance guideline including 3 feet wide walking paths. Six feet social distancing must be maintained in the pool at all times and at no time shall the number of patrons allowed in the pool exceed 50% design capacity of the pool. For simplification the pool owner/operator may wish to set a lower fixed number of patrons that can safely be at the pool/pool area at any given time while adhering to the requirements of social distancing.
- Consider implementing a reservation system or a time limit for patrons to accommodate the reduction in pool capacity.



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- Install physical barriers or visual cues or signs to ensure that staff, patrons, and swimmers stay at least six feet apart from those they don't live with, both in and out of the water where possible.
- Develop revised deck layouts in the standing and seating areas so individuals can remain at least 6 feet apart from others not in their household.
- In areas of concern, mark six-foot spaces on pool deck, restroom and other shared areas to help users visualize safe distancing.
- In areas with a lot of cross traffic, direct pedestrian traffic to enter/exit these locations in specific ways or indicate one-way traffic wherever possible.
- When lap swimming is provided, allow only one swimmer per lane at a time unless the swimmers are from the same household. Encourage pre-registration for lap swim times.
- Prohibit the sharing of objects including goggles, nose clips, snorkels, toys and floatation devices.
- If necessary hire an attendant to enforce social distancing. If a lifeguard is present, their job is NOT to enforce social distancing and mask wearing. The lifeguard's job is to watch the swimmers in the pool.
- If the pool owner/operator feels they cannot control social distancing in the pool then they can close the pool.
- If there are complaints of overcrowding in a public pool, the Director of Health has the authority to close a public pool based on there being a health nuisance per the Regulations of CT State Agencies, Section 19-13-B33b(g).

#### General Guidance:

- Post information throughout the pool and surrounding areas to frequently remind swimmers and visitors to take steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These messages should include information about:
  - Staying home if you are sick or do not feel well.
  - Using social distancing and maintaining at least six feet or more between individuals in all areas of the pool and deck whenever possible.
  - Swimmers should not stand, sit, or otherwise block walkways or any identified narrow passage area.
  - Face covering should be worn when entering buildings/pools areas or interacting in close proximity to other patrons. Face coverings should be removed when in there is a possibility of their getting wet.
  - Practice good personal hygiene including washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, using hand sanitizer, refraining from touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands, coughing and sneezing into an elbow, etc.
- Clean and disinfect at least daily, and more frequently as needed, commonly touched surfaces such as access gates, stair handrails, ladder handrails, etc., using List N EPA-registered disinfectants.
- Clean and disinfect between each use all deck furniture (chairs/tables/umbrella stands) using List N EPA-registered disinfectants; or remove all deck furniture and have patrons bring their own.
- Suggest patrons bring extra masks incase their original mask gets wet.
- Have patrons bring their own trash bags, drinks, and supplies. Carry in/Carry out rule.
- Have patrons bring their own water bottles. Water fountain use shall be restricted to water filling stations only. A sign shall be posted indicating such use
- Indoor pools should increase ventilation and also allow as much fresh air to flow into the room as possible..
- While the pool water does contain a level of disinfectant, the pools water itself should not be used to disinfect any objects, or be used to wash down any surfaces.

### Additional Concerns Regarding Hot Tubs/Whirlpool Spas:

- Due to the size of most hot tubs/whirlpool spas, and social distancing requirements, the use of hot tubs/whirlpool spas should be limited to single use.
- If the hot tub/whirlpool spa has been closed for a period of time please consult with CDC guidelines regarding Legionella and hot tubs. <https://www.cdc.gov/legionella/wmp/hotTub-operators.html>

### Additional Concerns Regarding Splash Pads/Spray Parks:

- Splash Pads/Spray Parks are by statutory definition a public pool and are allowed to be open. However, due to the amount of surfaces that potentially could be touched by children and the difficulty of policing social distancing between children, the decision to operate a splash pad/spray park should be given serious consideration.

### Competitive Swimming/Diving- Training and Meets:

- If and when the pool is used for competitive swimming/diving, either for training or meets, follow the USA Swimming Guidelines and any current Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) rules and/or best practices outlined in the specific sector guidelines that can be found on the following website: <https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/Coronavirus-Business-Recovery/Sector-Rules-for-Reopen>

### Swim Lessons:

- For swim lessons, follow any current DECD rules and/or best practices outlined in the specific sector guidelines that can be found on the following website: <https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/Coronavirus-Business-Recovery/Sector-Rules-for-Reopen>
- Stagger starting and ending times of swim lessons to reduce the risk of people gathering.

### Lifeguards:

- Lifeguards and other personnel in the pool area should wear a surgical-style mask, cloth mask, or other face covering that completely covers the nose and mouth when they are entering, exiting, or moving around work or common areas where contact with others cannot be avoided: this includes first aid, lost child searches, assisting handicapped individuals, and any other close contact with visitors.
  - Visitors, friends, and off duty lifeguards should not be within six feet of lifeguard stands. Operators should delineate an exclusion line using cones or lines.
  - Lifeguards should avoid sitting next to each other on lifeguard stands.
    - Lifeguards should maintain social distance between lifeguards while providing the same coverage and protection necessary to ensure public safety
    - When workers are isolated in a workstation alone (i.e. a lifeguard sitting in an elevated chair overseeing the swim area), face coverings are not necessary.
- Lifeguards will remove any face coverings when swimming or performing an in water rescue.
- Lifeguard training should follow any current DECD rules and/or best practices outlined in the specific sector guidelines that can be found on the following website: <https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/Coronavirus-Business-Recovery/Sector-Rules-for-Reopen>

### Public Restrooms and Shower Facilities:

- In accordance with the Regulations of CT State Agencies, Section 19-13-B33b, bathrooms/shower facilities associated with public pool must remain open at all times when the public pool is open.
- Follow the current CDC guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting when cleaning and disinfecting bathrooms/shower areas: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- Clean and disinfect public areas and restrooms at least daily, and more frequently as needed, using List N EPA-registered disinfectants, particularly on high-touch surfaces such as faucets, toilets, doorknobs and light switches.
- Make sure supplies for handwashing, including soap and materials for drying hands, are fully stocked every time the bathroom is cleaned.
- Any non-essential amenities, such as towel service, should be suspended.
- Restroom and shower facilities should limit the number of users at any one time based on the facility size current social distancing guidelines.
- Disable, or mark every other or every third locker for non-use to enforce six-foot social distancing requirement. Facilities where lockers are assigned to members are not required to disable lockers but must enforce social distancing requirement.
- Remove any casual seating other than benches by lockers as necessary.
- Post a cleaning schedule at each location, and stick to it.
- Install touch-free entry points at restrooms and other facilities if possible.
- Install touchless sensors on faucets, paper towel, and soap dispensers wherever possible.
- Install and stock toilet seat cover dispensers if possible.

### Disinfectants:

- List N EPA-registered disinfectants
- Sanitizer with 60% alcohol
- 1/3 cup household bleach / 1 gal. water

### Other Information:

- Review and consult the CDC guidance on [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for aquatic venues at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/parks-rec/aquatic-venues.html>

April 19, 2021