

**Follow-up Responses from the June 11, 2020 Aquatic Relaunch
Discussion with
Alberta Health (Government of Alberta), Alberta Health Services - Safe
Health Environments, Aquatic Stakeholders and Industry Partners**

**Information is up to date as of June 19, 2020. Further updates to guidance documents
continues; check [Alberta Biz Connect](#) for the most up-to-date content.**

1. **The *Guidance for Swimming Pools and Whirlpools* states that hotel, motel, apartment and condominium pools may reopen in Stage 2, provided that a responsible person is available to ensure guidance in this document is followed. Who is a responsible person and how are they to oversee compliance with the guidance?**

The responsible person is someone designated by management to monitor the activities in the pool area during the time that the pool is open to their patrons. The responsible person does not have to be at the pool while in use but should be routinely checking the pool by visiting the pool area or through a camera to monitor patrons and reminding them, as needed, to follow the physical distancing requirements and maximum number of users, where applicable. In aquatic facilities with lifeguards, the COVID-19 responsible person should not be an on-duty lifeguard.

This activity reinforces the messaging to pool users to maintain physical distancing from those outside their cohort. It complements other measures to reduce the risk of transmission including routine cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces at the facility, and reminder that no one who is ill or has been exposed to COVID-19 should use the facility.

Hot tubs/whirlpools are to remain closed until Stage 3.

2. **The Alberta General Relaunch Guidance document only mentions the use of paper towels for hand drying. Many facilities have hot air dryers. Are hot air dryers allowed?**

Hot air dryers are allowed following proper handwashing. Physical hand drying with paper towels is preferred to hot air dryers as it reduces the risk of germs being spread through the air. However, with proper handwashing (wash hands for 20 seconds) there would be little virus remaining on the hands. Facilities may wish to advise patrons to avoid the use hot air dryers for drying their hair or warming their bodies after being in the shower/pool.

3. **Why are hot tubs and whirlpools not allowed to open during Stage 2?**

Whirlpools, steam saunas, dry saunas and hot tubs will remain closed for Stage 2 of relaunch, as they generally do not promote physical distancing. Compared to pools, they have limited seating space and are intended to allow bathers to sit in close proximity. There can also be limited space for bathers to exit/enter (i.e. single stairwells, limited space to pass other bathers).

Based on what we know now, there is no scientific evidence that the warmer water or the hydrojets in whirlpools contribute to the spread of the virus.

4. The current version of the Guidance has removed the maximum number of people (previously 100). Can you confirm how a facility should determine a capacity limit to ensure physical distancing of 2m?

A swimming pool facility can have more than 100 people, so long as physical distancing can be maintained. Each facility should determine the maximum number of patrons based on the size of the deck, number of pool basin(s) and the ability to maintain 2 m physical distance (except for family or cohort).

You may also refer to professional organizations, such as the Alberta Lifesaving Society, for guidance on how to calculate the facility capacity.

5. How should the cohorts be used when considering capacity limits?

[Guidance](#) is available to help facilities understand the cohort concept. The cohorting concept is not applicable to patrons who “drop-in” to a pool facility, as they are required to maintain a 2m distance from one another at all times. Cohorting may be a strategy for organizers of swimming lessons, swim camps and swim teams who are unable maintain physical distancing as part of their activities.

6. When an instructor or coach is participating in several classes with different cohorts and physical distancing isn't possible, what measures should be taken? Masking is not considered an option in aquatic environments.

Instructors or coaches who must come within 2m of class, camp or team participants are considered part of that cohort. We strongly discourage one coach or instructor participating in multiple cohorts. A coach or instructor serving multiple groups should maintain 2m distance from the participants at all times. If this is impossible or not feasible, additional dedicated coaches or instructors may be necessary or the activity should be postponed in Stage 2.

7. Under Cleaning and Disinfecting, the Guidance indicates that chlorinated pool water is an effective disinfectant. Can the pool water be used to disinfect pool equipment, such as tubes, poles, and lifejackets?

No, it is not recommended. The level of chlorine in the pool water is sufficient to inactivate the coronavirus in the water and it's safe to swim in the pool. However, pool water chemistry tends to fluctuate and it is more reliable to clean and disinfect equipment using appropriate cleaning and disinfection processes.

8. Quaternary ammonia cleaning products are generally not recommended in the pool environment. But there is information in AHS resources recommending the use of quaternary ammonia (QUAT) disinfectants as a low level disinfectant for surfaces.

There are no specific requirements for cleaning products and they do not need to contain quaternary ammonia. When choosing a disinfectant, there are a variety of disinfectants that are effective against COVID-19, some, such as quaternary ammonia, are not compatible with a pool environment. Please review the manufacturer's information for your disinfectant(s) and choose a product without quaternary ammonia or avoid using them in areas where they may drain into the pool water and negatively affect the pool chemistry.

9. Can cloth wipes be used for disinfecting and then laundered?

The General Relaunch Guidance says '*Ensure disposable towels and spray cleaners, or disposable wipes are available to regularly clean commonly used surfaces.*'

The simplest approach is to use disposable wipes so that contaminated cloths are not re-used. If well-monitored, cloths could be used to clean and disinfect if laundered daily using detergent soap, hot water and mechanical drying.

10. What type of disinfectant should be used?

Regular household cleaning and disinfecting products are effective against COVID-19 when used according to the directions on the label. Preferably, use a product labeled as a disinfectant that has a Drug Identification Number (DIN)/ is Health Canada approved.

Health Canada has approved several hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers for use against COVID-19. ([Health Canada Hard-surface disinfectants](#)) Use these lists to look up the DIN number (for hard-surface disinfectants) or NPN number (for hand sanitizer) of the product you are using or to find an approved product. Make sure to follow instructions on the product label to disinfect effectively.

Alternatively, use a bleach-water solution with 20 ml (4 teaspoons) of unscented, household bleach to 1000 ml (4 cups) water. Ensure the surface remains wet with the bleach water solution for 1 minute.

11. How frequently do high touch surfaces need to be cleaned and disinfected?

The guidance requires facilities to enhance the frequency of cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces. At a minimum, we suggest that high touch surfaces be cleaned and disinfected at the end of the day. From there, facilities should consider cleaning at set intervals such as every four hours or after times of peak usage.

Items, which may be shared or rented, such as pool noodles and lifejackets, should be cleaned and disinfected between uses. Equipment that is intended to contact the eyes, nose and mouth, such as eye goggles and snorkels, should not be rented or shared.

12. The Guidance has recommended increased regular cleaning of areas like change rooms and showers but doesn't specifically require cleaning and disinfection between each user. This seems inconsistent with advice in other sectors.

Public facilities such as recreation centers and swimming pools were closed in Stage 1. In reopening these facilities for stage 2, appropriate restrictions and guidance were put in place to mitigate the risk of infection transmission among workers and patrons. Guidance is tailored to risks associated with in different sectors so there may be inconsistencies. As sector-specific guidance is subject to change, we encourage you to regularly visit <https://www.alberta.ca/biz-connect>.

13. For water spray parks with washrooms, should the washrooms be open to the public?

Yes, washrooms should be open to the public while the water spray park is open. Access to washroom promotes good sanitation, provides handwashing facilities and access to diaper changing areas. The washroom should be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition and fully stocked with supplies.

14. Does each facility need a satisfactory water sample prior to opening?

You should contact your local public health inspector to review the steps for re-opening to re-establish satisfactory pool water quality and to review the COVID response measures. Based on capacity, a public health inspector may be able to arrange an onsite inspection prior to reopening but ultimately the facility must confirm water quality with a satisfactory bacteriological water result.

It would also be helpful to develop a plan outlining the COVID response measures. The plan provides a reference for staff but would not need to be submitted to Alberta Health Services.

15. For water spray parks with washrooms, should the washrooms be open to the public?

Yes, washrooms should be open to the public while the water spray park is open. Access to washroom promotes good sanitation, provides handwashing facilities and access to diaper changing areas. The washroom should be cleaned and disinfected at least once per day or more frequently depending on usage.

16. Is AHS recommending that patrons take cleansing showers before and/or after swimming? Or are we advising them to come ready to swim and then shower at home?

It is still important to take a cleansing shower prior to swimming in order to reduce the microbes and dirt that would be introduced into the pool. You can evaluate your facility and set up traffic flows and cleaning procedures that would allow patrons to shower onsite.

17. Will there be a specific form available that people need to complete and submit regarding contact tracing?

No, there is no specific form. The facility may choose how to best collect the contact information for attendees. Please refer to the Contact Tracing information outlined in the Guidance for Swimming Pools and Whirlpools document.

18. Are there any concerns regarding patrons bringing their own pool equipment to be used? For example, should the equipment go through a shower before into the pool?

There is little concern regarding the risk of COVID since the equipment is to be used only by its owner however, any item brought to the pool should be clean, so as not to introduce more contaminants into the pool.

19. Would it be reasonable to have a sign at the front, "Limit to 3 households and maintain your physical distancing."

Yes, it would be reasonable to have a sign specifying the total number of people allowed in the facility and reminding patrons about physical distancing. Each facility will need to determine the number of individuals allowed in the facility, and how they can best share that information.

20. Is one swimmer per lane recommended?

Yes, in most cases. When multiple people enter and use a swimming lane, it's difficult to maintain physical distancing. The facility may determine other ways to maintain distances by using alternate lanes etc. However, swimmers from the same cohort (e.g., lesson group, swim team) or family could share a lane.