



# SUMMARY OF CURRENT RECOMMENDED PRACTICES FOR OPERATING UNDER COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

May 2020

National laws, guidance, regulations and restrictions must be observed and respected at all times.

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# Notice

This is general guidance only for consideration by operators when re-opening their facility. It does not include swimming pools, saunas, spa areas, or outside activities. National conditions may apply and alter this guidance.

The operational requirements for adherence to the European standards contained in EN 17229:2019 Fitness Centres remain applicable to the context of this general guidance. These standards include the operational and managerial procedures for offering and delivering service in all publically accessible fitness centres.

It is presumed that common areas such as cafes, showers, and changing rooms are closed.

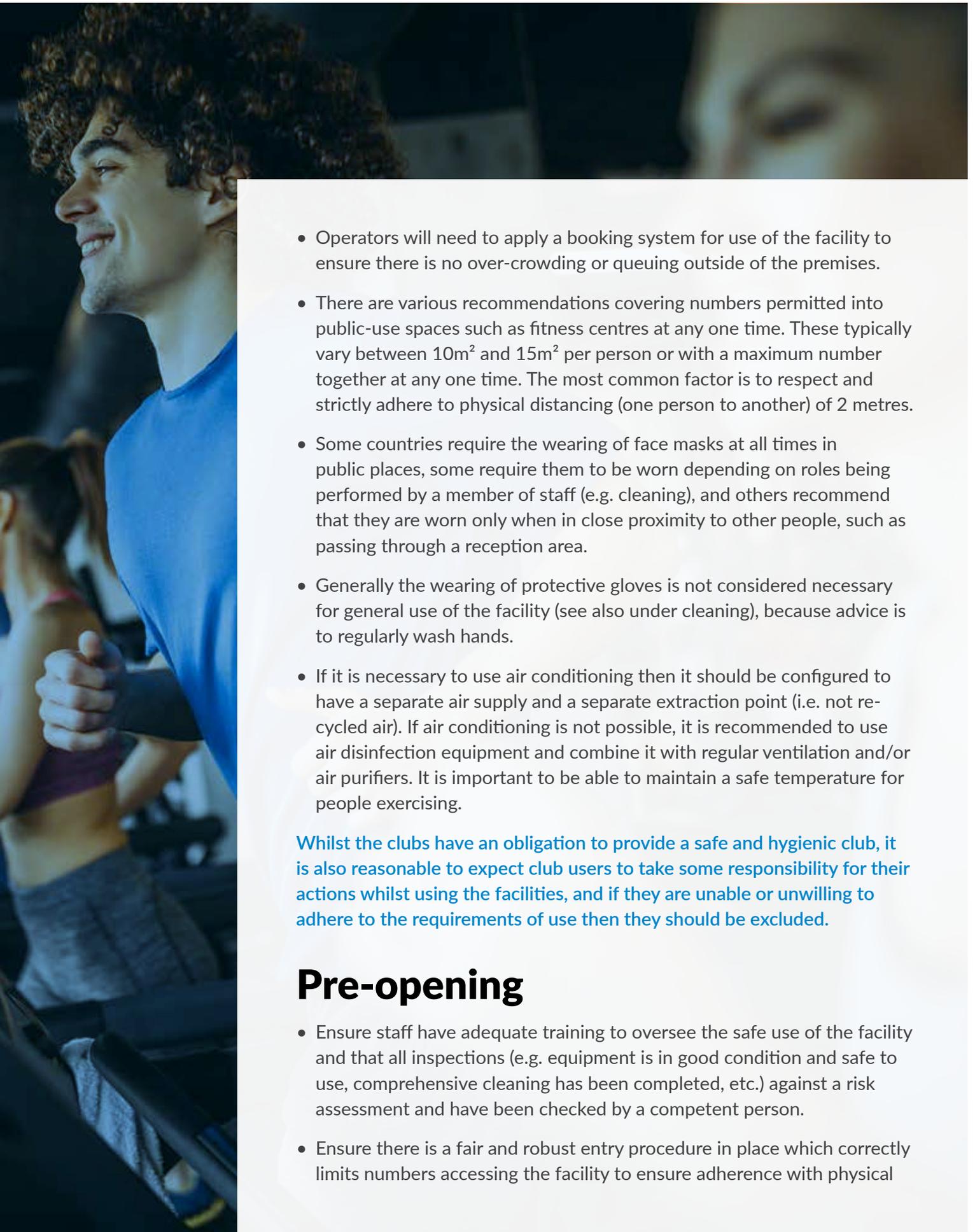
The area of up-skilling, standards, and training for operational and fitness staff are covered in a separate guidance paper.



## General

Both customers and staff must feel comfortable and confident that they are safe to be in the club, with their health and wellbeing being of paramount importance. Consideration and planning should include:

- Operators must comply with any specific documentation or auditing (e.g. by health/environmental control officer) that is in force.
- Any person – staff, customer, tradesperson/supplier - who shows any signs of Covid-19 must be excluded from the premises and to be instructed to follow current guidance (e.g. isolation, testing, etc.).
- It is worth considering dividing staff into at least two independent teams. In the event of a Covid-19 case which requires isolation, another team will be able to maintain operations.
- Additional staff training will be necessary to ensure they are confident in dealing with possible conflicts arising between members and/or a member and an employee who is concerned about someone's conduct and non-observance of prevailing usage requirements.
- Information must be given to users of the club prior to them visiting which explains all procedures and protocols to be observed. It is worth considering users signing a declaration that they have read and understood their obligations.
- Posters and signs should be on display throughout the club to reinforce key messages of physical distancing, wiping-down, and hygiene protocols, etc.
- Sweat-absorbing personal equipment such as yoga or exercise mats should not be communal. Customers should bring their own if required for their training.
- Water drinking points should be closed and customers should be told to bring their own pre-filled drinks.
- Personal interviews, training reviews etc. can be conducted on-line if necessary to reduce unnecessary close contact between staff and customers.



- Operators will need to apply a booking system for use of the facility to ensure there is no over-crowding or queuing outside of the premises.
- There are various recommendations covering numbers permitted into public-use spaces such as fitness centres at any one time. These typically vary between 10m<sup>2</sup> and 15m<sup>2</sup> per person or with a maximum number together at any one time. The most common factor is to respect and strictly adhere to physical distancing (one person to another) of 2 metres.
- Some countries require the wearing of face masks at all times in public places, some require them to be worn depending on roles being performed by a member of staff (e.g. cleaning), and others recommend that they are worn only when in close proximity to other people, such as passing through a reception area.
- Generally the wearing of protective gloves is not considered necessary for general use of the facility (see also under cleaning), because advice is to regularly wash hands.
- If it is necessary to use air conditioning then it should be configured to have a separate air supply and a separate extraction point (i.e. not recycled air). If air conditioning is not possible, it is recommended to use air disinfection equipment and combine it with regular ventilation and/or air purifiers. It is important to be able to maintain a safe temperature for people exercising.

**Whilst the clubs have an obligation to provide a safe and hygienic club, it is also reasonable to expect club users to take some responsibility for their actions whilst using the facilities, and if they are unable or unwilling to adhere to the requirements of use then they should be excluded.**

## Pre-opening

- Ensure staff have adequate training to oversee the safe use of the facility and that all inspections (e.g. equipment is in good condition and safe to use, comprehensive cleaning has been completed, etc.) against a risk assessment and have been checked by a competent person.
- Ensure there is a fair and robust entry procedure in place which correctly limits numbers accessing the facility to ensure adherence with physical

distancing requirements.

- Operators will need to a high-level of communication with their customers which reinforces all new requirements for use, and what to do in the event of a problem occurring.
- Adequate hand sanitizer and/or soap must be ready and available for both staff and customers to use.
- Protective equipment should be available for all operational staff.
- Tradespeople/suppliers shall agree and observe all health and safety protocols in place and also to respect physical distancing requirements.

## First Aid

European standards EN17229:2019 require a specific response in the event of life-threatening medical emergencies. Through the risk assessment process for the facility it needs to ensure that there is fast detection, then alerting (calling for emergency services) and appropriate intervention.

Generally, first aid provision should remain available, but when considering the Covid-19 context some additional precautions may be required such as gloves, face masks, and resus masks if resuscitation is involved.

## Customers

Specific instructions should be made to customers before they enter the facility so they are aware of expectations and requirements and how to conduct themselves.

It is highly likely that they will have to pre-book visits and that these are time-limited. Additionally advice and guidance can be given to reinforce basic messages, to include:

- Stay home if they have any symptoms or if they are considered to be a “vulnerable” or “at risk” group as defined by national guidelines (e.g. over 70 year olds).
- To always wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (or to use alcohol/disinfectant hand sanitisers) on entering the building, and at regular intervals and after using equipment, etc.
- To be respectful of all other people in the facility and to keep a 2m physical distance.
- To wear clean workout clothes and shoes (not from the outside).
- If it is necessary to cough or sneeze, to do this into a clean tissue which is safely discarded, or into their elbow.
- To follow club guidance on disinfecting machines and equipment before and after use, and to consider using appropriate gloves on small equipment such as dumbbells.
- If they are working with a PT to always respect physical distancing and for added safety of the PT to consider wearing a face mask.
- Personal towels should not be used – instead the club needs to provide adequate quantities of single-use paper towels which can be properly disposed of.

## Staff

The health and wellbeing of operational staff is as important as other users and customers especially as potentially they may be spending long (shift) periods in the club.

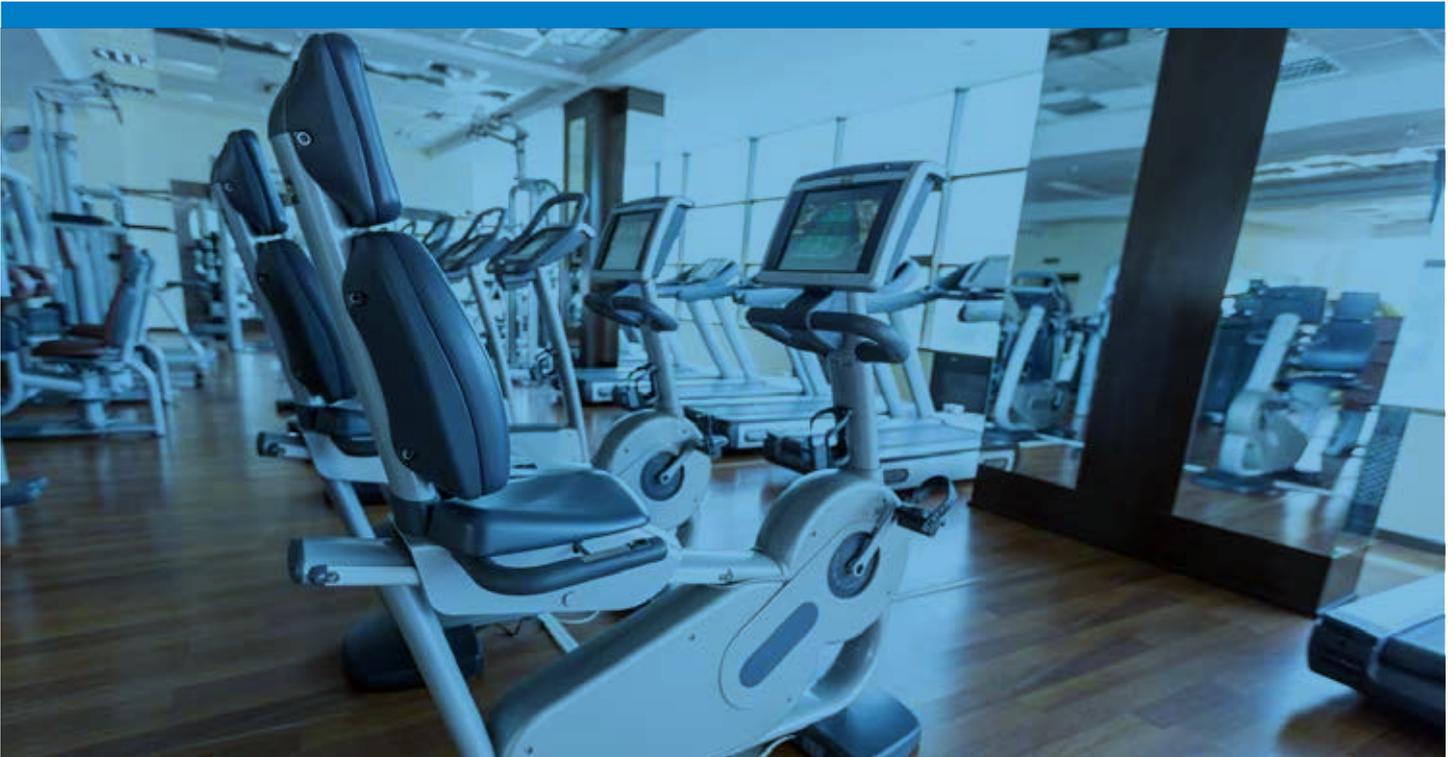
- Employees must be able to meet physical distance requirements of at least 2 meters with both their colleagues and users and this also applies to any training or instruction being given.
- Employees must only attend work, if they are completely symptom free.
- In addition to the means for regular hand disinfection and washing, operators must provide staff with protective hand creams. This is because frequent disinfection dries the skin, and the use of creams prevents skin problems.
- Hand wipes/sanitiser should be easily available to any other personal protective equipment which they may need to carry-out their work responsibilities.
- In situations such as at the reception where it is impractical to physically distance by 2 metres then there should be a physical barrier between staff and customer. This can be, for example, a screen made of plastic or glass as often seen in supermarkets.
- Card/contactless payment should be promoted.

## Cleaning

All customers and staff should expect the club to be kept clean and hygienic for its use and this will require a continuous cleaning programme set against risk-assessed criteria. A visual demonstration that there is a good and reliable system of cleaning in place will help to build trust and confidence with users. This will involve:

- After appropriate and adequate training, staff should undertake regular cleaning throughout the premises and especially any “high contact points” (e.g. door handles wash basins and taps), against rigorous cleaning procedures.
- If customers are expected to wipe-down and clean equipment after their use then appropriate supplies of cleaning materials must be available together with clear instructions for their use.
- Particular attention should be given to the surfaces to be cleaned and appropriate measures taken to use correct timing and materials.
- If there is a Covid-19 case in the facility then the operator should put into practice national guidance for a deep-cleaning exercise and if necessary clearance from their health authority before re-opening. Cleaning in non-healthcare settings while cleaning all areas of the facility.
- Provide adequate bins for the safe disposal of paper towels which have been used for cleaning and personal uses which are then regularly collected. The bins should include plastic sacks which are then tied and disposed of according to local refuse storage and collection requirements.

- If there is a suspect Covid-19 incident then all cleaning and potentially contaminated materials need to be tied in plastic sacks and then put into a second sack which is also tied. Disposal is subject to local refuse and collection requirements.



## Training areas (gym equipment)

Training areas may have to be re-configured to ensure physical distancing can be maintained. There is an array of guidance over good practice, but based on the 2m rule it would be appropriate that:

- Equipment needs to be arranged to ensure a 2m distance can be maintained. This can be achieved by moving out equipment or isolating it by covers, adding signs, disconnecting etc.
- The contact points between users and the equipment should be cleaned after use – provided there are clear protocols which can be observed and implemented these can be done either by user or staff using spray and single-use paper towels provided. This is in addition to the regular cleaning schedule throughout the facility.
- Extra signage regarding social distancing should be given in free-weights areas, and if equipment or techniques require the use of a spotter then these exercises cannot take place because they will infringe physical distancing rules.

## Group exercise spaces (studio)

The type and nature of group exercise classes may have to be moderated to help preserve the importance of physical distancing between the people taking part. General guidance indicates that:

- The 2m physical distance rule must be applied, and any maximum number stated under national restrictions must also be respected.
- The teacher/trainer/instructor should be physically isolated from any of the people taking part by at least 2m.
- If possible, markings should be taped on the floor to indicate the area for each participant and teacher.
- There should be at least a 10-15 minute space between classes to allow for cleaning, ventilation and disinfection to take place.
- The classes need to be organised so there is no “waiting around” which break physical distancing requirements.
- Ideally participants should bring their own mat, but if not then adequate cleaning must take place between classes.
- For indoor cycling and similar activities, the number of pieces of equipment should be reduced and laid-out to respect physical distancing requirements.



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