

Covid 19: Plan for safe reopening for physical training facilities with less than 250 members in Michigan.

-COVID19 is due to a novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV2. It is transmitted primarily through droplets, primarily of respiratory and oral origin. The R0, or infectivity rate, is 2.5-5.7 (meaning that every person with the infection may infect an additional 2.5-5.7 people). Methods which have demonstrated benefit in stopping or slowing spread of the disease include handwashing and physical distancing.

-The virus can prove lethal in what currently appears to be a small percentage of people under the age of 65. Age is also correlated with a poorer prognosis, with less than 0.1% fatality rate for US patients under age 45, and 0.5% case fatality rate for ages 45-54, and 1.4% in those aged 55-64. [NVSS - COVID-19 Alerts and Information](#)

-In the state of Michigan as of 5/9/20, there have been 46,756 patients that tested positive for COVID19, and 4526 deaths have been reported. Of note, there is generally preexisting chronic medical disease in those that succumb to this disease. There is a 10% case fatality rate for all ages that have been diagnosed with COVID 19. Of this 10% CFR for all ages, 3% of the deaths occur in the 40-49 year age range (0.3% CFR), 8% in the 50-59 range (0.8% CFR), and 18% from 60-69 (1.8% CFR). Given the lack of widespread testing that has occurred due to lack of testing supplies, this number is likely significantly lower, as the total number of cases in the denominator is presumed to be much, much higher than has been captured by testing only those people exhibiting symptoms.

https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98163_98173---,00.html

-Obesity, hypertension, and diabetes are risk factors for a poorer outcome for those infected with the SARS-CoV2 virus. A key management strategy for improving or controlling these conditions involves physical exercise as the cornerstone. Both cardiovascular and strength training have a myriad of health benefits, including improvement in the at-risk parameters for patrons affected by them.

-The mental health benefits of physical training are likewise essential for overall well-being. In addition to decreasing stress (which itself can cause dysregulation in normal immune system function and potentially worsen viral infections), it promotes feelings of well-being, allows a sense of community and purpose, and provides a positive focus for people who partake in it regularly. In particular, small physical fitness facilities have a “family” feel which helps to decrease the senses of isolation, hopelessness, and suicidal ideation that are far too prevalent in our state.

-According the Michigan Commission for Suicide Prevention, Michigan’s suicide rate is significantly higher than the national rate. Although underlying mental health conditions contribute to the rate of suicide, relationship problems, substance use and abuse, money and housing difficulties, legal problems, and poor physical health also play a substantial role.

-Governor Gretchen Whitmer has been granted emergency powers which expired on 4/30/20. However, the state of emergency for Michigan has been extended until 5/15/20. Gyms, casinos, restaurants, theaters, and other locations where people gather for entertainment have been forced to close since the stay at home order was placed on 3/17/2020. At this time, the order will expire at 12:01 AM on 5/29/20. Clearly some changes in business operations will be necessary while the current pandemic is still an active threat to allow for the safe, responsible reopening of Michigan’s economic engine.

-Some businesses which were initially closed and deemed “non-essential” have been allowed to resume operations after alterations in their practices were put in place to protect employees and/or customers. These include landscaping companies, nurseries/gardening centers, and real estate sales. Construction will be resuming on 5/7/20 involving commercial and residential real estate as well as road crews.

The R0 (“R naught”) number indicates the reproduction value of the virus. If R0 is greater than 1, this indicates spread in communities. An example: if the R0 of influenza is 1.3, and 1000 people have it, they will transmit it to 1300 people, who will then transmit it to 1690 people, and so on. If R0 is less than 1, this implies that the virus is considered to be controlled within the community, as the reproduction of each successive generation of viral infections will continue to infect LESS people. At this time, the R0 of COVID19 within Michigan is 0.8. <https://rt.live/>. This number has been achieved through stringent social distancing and a complete halt in Michigan’s economy. We believe that we are able to keep this momentum going while providing vitally important services to the community.

There is a huge difference between “big box” gyms such as Lifetime Fitness, Planet Fitness, and LA Fitness which have 4000-7000 members and smaller fitness facilities. Independently owned gyms, Crossfit affiliates, and personal training studios on the whole have less than 250 members, with less than 30 present in the facility together at any given time. To lump us into a group containing bars, restaurants, sporting venues, and casinos is a misclassification. We are much more akin to physical therapy offices, medium-sized retail spaces, or offices in this respect. Smaller member bases allow independent gym owners to control the environment and ensure its safety for our members, while providing them the opportunity to perform physical tasks that will ultimately improve their mental and physical health as well as immune function. Therefore, we propose the following measures:

-As Michigan small business owners who own and run independent fitness facilities of less than 250 members/10000 sq feet, we propose the following safe reopening policies:

1. Reclassification of small fitness facilities as defined above as appropriate for phase 4 opening. Facilities typically provide a minimum of 28 sq ft for each person using a facility and access to numbers of patrons is limited to this number. During phase 4, facilities would operate at 25% of normal capacity, or 100 sq feet allotted per member. Facilities will provide their own specific strategies to ensure this number is not exceeded and will detail them in their own site specific plans. At phase 5, we will move to 50% of capacity maximum, and at phase 6, full capacity of facility can resume.
2. Prominent signage will be placed for patrons to perform “self-health checks” before entering the facility. An electronic document can be sent easily to members as well containing the health screening questionnaire with recommendations to quarantine for 14 days if a member were to answer yes to any of the following in the health inventory assessment. E.g: Have you or anyone in your household experienced a temperature above 99.5 (oral), developed a sustained headache, cough, feeling generally unwell, congestion, sore throat, allergy symptoms that don’t respond to antihistamines, abdominal pain/vomiting/diarrhea, sudden onset of loss of smell and/or taste, or purple painful spots on toes or fingers. Additionally, all employees of the facilities will perform the same health inventory and perform self-temperature checks. If they are deemed to be possible COVID19 infection, they will leave the premises and quarantine at home. They may return to facility 7 days after fever resolves if present, or when symptom free for 7 days if fever absent, or after a total of 14 days after they entered quarantine has elapsed.

3. Patrons and employees will wash hands prior to entering training area and again before leaving facility. Adequate supplies of appropriate handwashing agents will be provided by facility.
4. Patrons will maintain a minimum of 6 ft of distance between each other while training. No equipment is to be shared, including bars, squat racks, deadlift platforms, and benches. There will be no community chalk; patrons must supply their own for their personal use only.
5. Patrons will wear a mask that covers both their nose and mouth while they are in the facility. This is to prevent droplet exposure in an environment where people are breathing more heavily under physical stress. If a patron is unable to mask, they will not be permitted to train in the facility until such time as masks are no longer deemed advisable by the CDC or local government.
6. Shirts and shoes will be worn at all times.
7. Classes and training will be “staged”, i.e, there will be no overlap between members’ reserved time slots. All members from prior time slot must leave before those who have reserved the next time slot may enter.
8. Patrons will be reminded by signage to not touch face, mouth, or eyes while in facility.
9. Drinking fountains will remain off during the pandemic. Patrons must bring their own water bottles from home.
10. Patrons must wipe off equipment with bleach solution that will be amply available throughout the facility. They must wipe off barbells with alcohol solution before and after use.
11. The facility will be swept and mopped nightly, including bathrooms. All frequently used objects and surfaces will be disinfected at the end of each day, as well as throughout the day by facility staff and patrons.
12. If a patron is found to have COVID19, or develops symptoms suggestive of COVID 19 within 48 hours of being at the facility, they must notify the facility immediately. At that time, the facility will be closed for a thorough cleaning and disinfecting of all surfaces before it will be reopened to members.

CDC guidelines for safe reopening are listed below and have been covered in full in our proposal.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>

- social distancing (specifically, staying 6 feet away from others when you must go into a shared space)
- frequently washing hands or use alcohol-based (at least 60% alcohol) hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available
- wearing cloth face coverings
- avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth
- staying home when sick
- cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces