

Reopening New York City: What Gyms and Fitness Center Operators Need to Know

Beginning Sept. 2, 2020, **gyms and fitness centers** can reopen in NYC once the below steps are taken, which include submitting a Gym and Fitness Facility Inspection Request and Attestation Form. Completing the form means that a facility has met new requirements issued by New York State to address COVID-19 and is ready for inspection by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC Health Department). The NYC Health Department is conducting virtual inspections of these facilities.

Gyms and fitness centers include stand-alone, hotel, residential and office gyms and fitness centers; and gyms and fitness centers in higher education institutions. Indoor group fitness classes must remain closed at this time.

Check nyc.gov/health/coronavirus for updates. City and State requirements may change as we learn more about COVID-19 and the best ways to reduce transmission and keep New Yorkers safe.

Remember the four key actions to prevent COVID-19 transmission:

- **Stay home if sick:** Stay home if you are sick unless you are leaving for essential medical care (including [testing](#)) or other essential errands.
- **Physical distancing:** Stay at least 6 feet away from other people.
- **Wear a face covering:** Protect those around you. You can be contagious without symptoms and spread the disease when you cough, sneeze or talk. Face coverings help reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- **Practice healthy hand hygiene:** Wash your hands often with soap and water or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available; clean frequently touched surfaces regularly; avoid touching your face with unwashed hands; and cover your cough or sneeze with your arm, not your hands.

Consider allowing employees that can do all or some of their work from home to do so, as the best way to protect employees is to work from home as much as possible.

What do I have to do to legally reopen my gym or fitness center?

You must do the following in order to reopen:

- Develop a [Safety Plan](#) and post it at your work site.
- Read the [New York State \(NYS\) guidelines](#) and affirm compliance. The State requires that you affirm that you have reviewed and understand the State-issued industry guidelines and that you will implement them. You can fill out the affirmation form at forms.ny.gov/s3/ny-forward-affirmation.
- Complete and submit the [Gym and Fitness Facility Inspection Request and Attestation Form](#).

I am ready to reopen my gym or fitness facility. How do I schedule an inspection?

Submit a completed [Gym and Fitness Facility Inspection Request and Attestation Form](#). An inspector with the NYC Health Department will contact you to schedule a virtual inspection.

What is a virtual inspection?

A virtual inspection is a video call between a NYC Health Department inspector and a gym manager. The inspector will ask about compliance with NYS requirements, and in some instances, will need to confirm visually that certain requirements have been met. The manager will take the inspector on a virtual tour, showing the inspector how the facility has complied with state requirements, such as, pointing out the posted safety plan and the gym’s supply of face coverings.

What equipment do I need for a virtual inspection?

To conduct the virtual inspection, you will need a tablet, laptop or smartphone and internet service. Inspections will be done through a video calling platform such as Facetime, Skype or WhatsApp.

What if I don’t have what is needed to be inspected virtually?

The NYC Health Department will discuss with you other inspection options, including an in-person inspection.

Can I open before the NYC Health Department conducts its inspection?

Yes, as long as you completed and submitted the inspection request form and attested that you have met State requirements, your facility can open starting Sept. 2, 2020.

What happens if my facility does not pass the NYC Health Department inspection?

If you fail the inspection, you must close your facility and correct whatever violations were observed. The inspector will provide you with information about contacting the Department when you are ready for a reinspection.

New York State limits capacity in gyms and fitness centers to 33% of the facility’s maximum allowable occupancy, and the NYC Health Department intake form requires me to indicate my maximum allowable capacity. What is that?

The maximum allowable occupancy is the number of people that were allowed to be in your gym before the COVID-19 capacity limits.

Can I hold group fitness classes in my gym or fitness center? What is an “indoor group fitness class”?

No, you cannot hold an indoor group fitness class. An indoor group fitness class is an activity with two or more participants led by either an in-person instructor or a remote or pre-recorded instructor.

Are gym patrons doing individualized training in the same space at the same time considered a prohibited “group fitness class”?

No.

Do prohibited “indoor group fitness classes” include group fitness classes held in an outdoor tent?

No. Group fitness classes may be held in an outdoor tent so long as at least two sides of the tent (constituting at least 50% of the total tent side area) remain fully open to allow for air to flow. All other requirements that apply to outdoor group fitness activities indicated in the [NYS Department of Health Interim Guidance for Sports and Recreation](#), must be followed, including wearing face coverings, screening, and physical distancing precautions.

Are face coverings required in a gym or fitness center?

Yes. NYS requires employees and patrons to wear face coverings at all times while at the gym or fitness center (unless the patron is under age 2 or medically unable to tolerate a face covering). Acceptable face coverings include cloth face coverings and disposable masks appropriate for exercise that cover both the mouth and nose. *Per NYS, bandanas, buffs and gaiters are **not** acceptable face coverings for use in gyms and fitness centers.*

Do I need a permit to operate?

Depending on your facilities, you may require a Physical Culture Establishment (PCE) permit. More information on PCEs and the permit application process can be found [here](#).

Does the HVAC technician who reviews my central air system need to be certified?

Yes. NYS requires documentation about central air systems to be provided by a “certified HVAC technician, professional, or company, ASHRAE-certified professional, certified retro-commissioning professional, or New York licensed professional building engineer.”

The NYC Health Department will accept HVAC certification provided by a government entity outside of NYC or a private HVAC-certifying body.

Where can I get other information regarding reopening?

For answers to other key questions about reopening, please read [Reopening New York City: Frequently Asked Questions](#). Not all questions will be relevant, but we hope this will help you implement the new requirements. The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s [COVID-19 businesses page](#) has additional information and tools for reopening and maintaining operations during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves. 10.29.20