

COVID-19 Prevention Guidance and Reopening of Water Recreation Facilities in Phases (Revised)

On May 4, 2020, the Office of the Governor announced [the Safe Start Washington re-opening plan](#), which discusses a phased-in approach to reopening Washington State. This guidance document addresses how the phased-in approach applies to Water Recreation Facilities regulated in Washington State under chapters 70.90 RCW, 246-260 WAC, and 246-262 WAC, and provides guidelines to reduce transmission of COVID-19 among employees and patrons. This guidance is subject to change as needed.

Factors considered in the development of this guidance document

- [High-risk populations as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) need the most protection.
- Types of facilities and activities included in this document.
- [According to CDC](#), COVID-19 transmission is not likely through contact with properly disinfected water. Therefore, this guidance focuses on reducing transmission through air and frequently touched surfaces.
- Current, as of this last update, [Washington's Phased Approach and Safe Start Washington](#)

Guidelines that apply to all Water Recreations Facilities in all Phases

[High-risk populations](#) are discouraged from using any Water Recreation Facilities until Phase 4 is achieved.

- See above for the definition of high-risk populations.
- See above for the Washington's Phased Approach stating that high-risk populations are encouraged to "Stay Home" until Phase 4.
- If it is decided that using a water recreation facility is beneficial for the health of people who belong to high-risk populations, use as many precautions as possible to protect them from possible exposure to COVID-19.

Facility owners and managers must do the following:

Plan Development

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- Prior to reopening, all water recreation facilities are required to develop for each facility a comprehensive COVID-19 exposure control, mitigation and recovery plan. The plan must include policies regarding the following control measures:
 - Designation of staff to implement the plan;
 - PPE utilization;
 - On-location physical distancing;
 - Hygiene;
 - Sanitation;
 - Symptom monitoring;
 - Incident reporting;
 - Location disinfection procedures;
 - COVID-19 safety training;
 - Competitive swim team practice safety protocols;
 - Exposure response procedures; and
 - Post-exposure incident mitigation and recovery plan.

A copy of the plan must be available at the location and available for inspection by state and local authorities. Failure to meet these requirements will result in sanctions, including the location being shut down.

Facility Safety

- Ensure that the facility is safe to reopen and meets all requirements in Chapters [246-260 WAC](#) and [246-262 WAC](#), as applicable.
- Refer to the [guidance document](#) on reopening after a long period of shut-down.

Physical Distancing

- Maintain six-foot minimum physical distancing for employees and patrons through all phases. Minimize the chance that people come within six feet of one another as much as possible. This applies to all parts of the facility (in the water, decks, bathrooms, shower rooms, locker rooms, and other communal areas).
 - Do not hold or allow activities unless six-foot minimum physical distancing can be maintained except for unavoidable brief instances where individuals pass by one another. See Face Coverings section for swim instructors who need to provide close contact instructions.
 - People of the same household may occupy the same lane (or a section of the pool) as long as all Phase Specific Requirements below are met and a safe way to get in and out of the pool for the patrons and staff is provided by means of steps, ladders, zero-depth-entry, etc.
 - A patron who requires care to participate in activities allowed in this document may be accompanied by a caregiver without physical distancing between them as long as the facility staff is informed about it to avoid misunderstanding and confusion.

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- Develop a strategy for patrons to maintain six-foot physical distancing in the water, locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms, and other communal areas. This may be accomplished by controlling the number of people using the facility, providing visual cues such as markings on the floor, etc. Close communal areas if that is an option. Use this [supplemental guidance](#) for more information.
- Remove or rearrange lounge chairs and tables as necessary.
- Adopt other prevention measures such as barriers to block sneezes and coughs where physical distancing is not possible. For example, this may be appropriate for front desk personnel.

Personal Hygiene

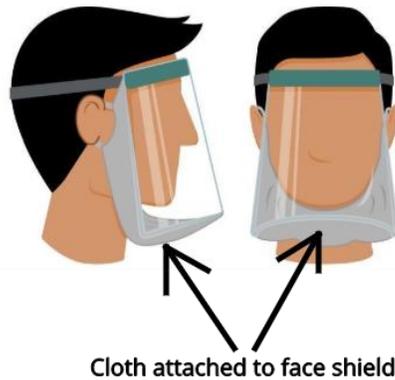
- Encourage staff and patrons to protect themselves and others by following the guidelines below.
 - Wash hands often with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds. Provide an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol in addition to (not as a replacement for) handwashing stations if desired.
 - Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Cover mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
 - Stay home if you are sick. Stay home as much as possible.

Face coverings and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Face coverings such as masks and cloth coverings to cover the nose and the mouth are required at all times at a water recreation facility according to the [Health Secretary's order](#).
 - Face covering may be removed when:
 - Being in an outdoor public area (e.g., outdoor spa, outdoor pool deck) while maintaining the minimum six-foot physical distancing with all non-household members
 - Engaging in indoor or outdoor exercise activities (e.g., swimming in pools and using waterslides)
 - Staff and patrons must wear a face covering in an **indoor environment**, even if six-foot physical distancing is maintained, in situations including but not limited to:
 - Lounging on the pool deck
 - Using a spa (hot tub)
 - Lifeguarding on the pool deck (not in water)
 - [Provide training](#) to staff on how to [properly use masks](#)
 - Masks made of bathing suit materials are available on the market.
 - More information about face coverings available at [DOH website](#).

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- Identify personal protective equipment (PPE) and cloth face coverings in accordance with [L&I requirements on facial coverings and industry specific COVID-19 standards](#) and their [guidance on masks](#). Provide the necessary PPE and supplies to staff.
 - Swim instructors, who need to provide close contact support (within 6 feet) to beginner swimmers who are not wearing masks, are considered to be in medium to high risk category according to [this document](#) provided by L&I. The following requirements apply to these swim instructors:
 - Wear a face shield with cloth attachment that is made of water proof or quick drying material (e.g., Tyvek, Badger Shield, Humanity Shield)



Source: Washington State Labor and Industries

- Limit the time providing close-contact instruction (within 6 feet) to a maximum of 5 minutes for each student in each swim lesson session.
- Receive consultation from L&I when in doubt.
- If proper PPE is not available, do not provide close-contact lessons. Seek other alternatives such as asking parents to provide support for the students and using other equipment to keep physical distancing.

Environmental Hygiene

- Ensure frequent cleaning and disinfection, especially for high-touch surfaces. Refer to [these recommendations](#) by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Examples of high-touch surfaces include but not limited to: Door handles, locker handles, faucets, drinking fountains, toilets, shower handles, diaper changing stations, light switches, pens, chairs, tables, desks, handrails, pool noodles, and kickboards.
- Store cleaning products properly away from small children.
- Pool water does not qualify as an effective surface disinfectant to inactivate COVID-19 virus.

Limit Access to Facility

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- [Have a policy](#) in place to keep out staff and patrons who may have COVID-19 symptoms and exclude staff and patrons who develop COVID-19 symptoms while at the facility, isolate them, call for medical treatment if necessary, and to disinfect surfaces touched by them.
- Discourage access to the facility by patrons who may be infectious by providing:
 - Signage at the entrance, and
 - Information handout, verbal instruction, or whatever method works best for your facility.
 - [WAC 246-260-131](#)(5)(a)(iii) requires that the facility owner posts a signage for “Prohibiting use by anyone with a communicable disease or anyone who has been ill with vomiting or diarrhea within the last two weeks.”

Other considerations

- Educate employees about COVID-19 in the language they best understand. The education should include the signs, symptoms and risk factors associated with COVID-19 and how to prevent spread. This could be in the form of in-person training (while practicing physical distancing), on-line training, handouts, posters, etc.
- Follow requirements in Governor Inslee’s [Proclamation 20-46 High-Risk Employees – Workers’ Rights](#).
- Keep a safe and healthy facility in accordance with state and federal law, and comply with COVID-19 worksite-specific safety practices, as outlined in Governor Inslee’s [“Stay Home, Stay Healthy” Proclamation 20-25](#), and in accordance with the [Washington State Department of Labor & Industries General Coronavirus Prevention Under Stay Home, Stay Healthy Order](#) and the [Washington State Department of Health Workplace and Employer Resources & Recommendations](#).

Phase Specific Requirements

- To learn in which phase your facility/pool can reopen, see the list below and the table at the end of this document.
- To find out which phase your county is currently in and how decisions are made to allow counties to move from one phase to the next, see [this website](#).
- To learn what data are used to assess COVID-19 risk, see [this website](#).

Phase 1: No Water Recreation Facilities are allowed to open during this phase

Modified Phase 1 and Phase 2: The following requirements apply:

- No Recreational Water Contact Facilities regulated under [WAC 246-262](#) are allowed to open.

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- Float tank facilities and designated swim areas in natural waters (outdoor beaches) are allowed to open with the requirements in the table at the end of this document.
- All other Water Recreation Facilities regulated under [WAC 246-260](#) are allowed to open with the following conditions except for activity pools.
- Patrons must make an appointment in advance to use these facilities except for outdoor beaches. Patrons who use a “limited use pool” as defined in [WAC 246-260-010\(46\)](#) must be living or staying at the facility, and must not include invited guests during these phases. Organized programs at limited use pools, as defined in [WAC 246-260-010\(46\)](#) may be held for patrons other than those specified under the limited use category, but in that case, appointments must be made with no exceptions.
- If an appointment system is not possible at your facility (e.g., hotel/motel pools and apartment pools), then the following must be met.
 - Maximum occupancy calculated according to the requirements in this section must be posted in conspicuous locations for all patrons to see.
 - Designated staff on site must periodically check the facility to ensure that the number of patrons in the facility does not exceed the maximum occupancy.
 - If it is not feasible to follow the above requirements, do not open the facility.
 - Organized programs at limited use pools, as defined in WAC 246-260, may not happen at these facilities without an appointment system.
- The most restrictive of all below must be followed (excluding float tank facilities and outdoor beaches). The total number of patrons (staff excluded) present within the facility at any given time must not exceed:
 - 50 people maximum. For a large facility that has multiple pools within the facility (for example, a municipal aquatic center or an athletic club aquatic facility), the cap may exceed 50 people if a reasonable number is established between the facility manager and the local health department. DOH is available for consultation.
 - The water surface area (square footage) of the pool plus the surface area of the perimeter deck divided by 162 for each pool. “Perimeter deck” is also known as wet deck, which means the pool deck area immediately adjacent to the pool’s edge. EXCEPTION: If combined water surface area of all pool(s) within an enclosure (room or fenced area) is less than 810 square feet and all patrons scheduled at one time are of the same household, follow the usual maximum bather load of the pool.
 - All patrons are able to comfortably and reasonably practice six-foot minimum physical distancing at all times except for between people from the same household. See [this document](#) for more information.
- Up to two people are allowed to occupy the same lane (6 feet minimum in width) at the same time and swim past each other for lap-swimming. More than two swimmers per lane, but no more than 4, are permitted for competitive swim team practices if supervised by a certified coach meeting the requirement of [WAC 246-260-99901](#) and the team’s COVID-19 safety and response plan includes a diagram of safe lane

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configurations that demonstrate swimmers will be able to maintain six feet of distancing except when swimmers briefly swim past each other. Swim teams are subject to and their swimmers count toward the total occupancy of a pool as described in this guidance. For lap swimming and swim team practices, no two swimmers are allowed to remain within 6 feet of each other during resting periods without a proper physical barrier between them.

- Develop written plans to ensure that six-foot minimum physical distancing is followed both by staff and patrons at all times. While developing plans consider the following:
 - People from the same household can be together but there should be adequate space to allow for physical distancing between people from different households
 - All parts of the facility, including but not limited to, pools, spas, decks, locker rooms, shower rooms, restrooms, offices, lounges, and front counters
 - The types of activities patrons engage in
- Implement user rotation and staggering as necessary to control crowds.
- No social gathering event (e.g., a birthday party) is allowed at a water recreation facility during these phases.
- Refer to [this guidance](#) to learn more about occupancy and tools you can use during different phases.

Phase 3: Most facilities are allowed to open with some restrictions.

- Both Water Recreation Facilities (regulated under [WAC 246-260](#)) and Recreational Water Contact Facilities (regulated under [WAC 246-262](#)) are allowed to open in this phase with the following restrictions.
- The most restrictive of the following must be adhered to:
 - The number of patrons for each pool must not exceed 50% of the normal bather capacity.
 - The number of patrons must not exceed 50 within the same facility enclosure. One facility enclosure may contain multiple pools. If it is a large facility enclosure, a waterpark for example, consult the local health jurisdiction to agree on a reasonable number. DOH is available for consultation.
 - All patrons are able to comfortably and reasonably practice six-foot minimum physical distancing at all times except for between people from the same household. See [this document](#) for more information.
 - Develop written plans to ensure that six-foot minimum physical distancing is followed both by staff and patrons at all times. While developing plans consider the following:
 - People from the same household can be together but there should be plenty of space to allow for physical distancing between people from different households.

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- All parts of the facility, including but not limited to, pools, spas, decks, locker rooms, shower rooms, restrooms, offices, lounges, and front counters
 - The types of activities patrons engage in
- If any social gathering event (e.g., a birthday party) is held at a water recreation facility during Phase 3, the maximum number of people allowed to gather in that event is ten. See [this document](#) for more information.
- Implement user rotation and staggering as necessary to control crowds.
- Refer to [this guidance](#) to learn more about occupancy and tools you can use during different phases.

Phase 4: All facilities are allowed to open with some restrictions.

- The number of people in the same enclosure may be above 50.
- Continue the six-foot physical distancing requirement.
 - Consider all parts of the facility for physical distancing.
 - Consider the types of activities patrons engage in.
 - People from the same household can be together but there should be plenty of space to allow for physical distancing between people from different households.
- Implement user rotation and staggering as necessary to control crowd.
- Refer to [this guidance](#) to learn more about occupancy and tools you can use during Phase 4.

Guidelines that apply to Lifeguarded Facilities

Facilities that require lifeguards, according to chapters [246-260 WAC](#) and [246-262 WAC](#) must do the following:

- Before reopening, develop written lifeguarding plans. Plans should address protection of lifeguards, staff, and patrons from COVID-19 transmission in addition to typical lifeguard requirements. The plans should address the following:
 - Provide education and training to lifeguards about COVID-19, transmission, and how to protect themselves and others.
 - Include lifeguard training plans at the facility to protect lifeguard instructors and trainees from potential COVID-19 transmission during training.
 - Develop a strategy to effectively lifeguard the facility while practicing physical distancing as much as possible.

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- Provide PPE to lifeguards. Appropriate types of PPE would depend on the type of rescuing activities necessary and whether the victim is a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case. Refer to [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and [American Heart Association’s recommendations](#).
- Lifeguards need to stay focused on monitoring patrons for water-safety-related risks. They should not be asked to enforce physical distancing or any other COVID-19 related rules to patrons as that would distract them from lifesaving duties.
- Washington Recreation & Park Association has developed very good [guidelines](#) for lifeguarding during COVID-19 outbreak, which has been recognized by DOH.

Timing of Reopening by Facility Type and Pool Type

Facility Type	Pool Type	Things to be considered	Timing of Reopening
Athletic gyms Private clubs	Swimming pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One person per lane for lap swimming is recommended* ● Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms ● Lifeguarding ● User rotation may be recommended 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Modified Phase 1 and Phase 2 if it meets all the conditions in the Phase Specific Requirements section of this document ● *Absolutely no more than 2 people in each lane for individual lap swimming, and no more than 4 for competitive swim team practices for Modified Phase 1 and Phase 2 (refer to specific phase requirements) ● **Waterpark like features regulated under WAC 246-262 are allowed in Phase 3 ● ***Activity pools with play features are not allowed to
	Wading pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide plenty of space to keep unrelated children separate ● Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms ● Lifeguarding ● User rotation may be recommended 	
	Therapy pools (exercise pools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms ● Lifeguarding ● User rotation may be recommended 	

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	Waterpark like features**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide plenty of space to keep unrelated children separate • Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms • Lifeguarding • User rotation may be recommended 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • open until Phase 3 even if they are regulated under WAC 246-260 • Lazy rivers are allowed to open in Modified Phase 1 and Phase 2 if the river feature is turned off. They are allowed to open in Phase 4 if the river feature is turned on. • Phase 4 if more than 50 people
	Activity pools***	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide plenty of space to keep unrelated children separate • Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms • Lifeguarding • User rotation may be recommended 	
	Spas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller spas may allow only one or two people at a time • Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms • Lifeguarding • User rotation may be recommended 	
Waterparks** Municipal pools	Swimming pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One person per lane for lap swimming is recommended* • Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms • Lifeguarding • User rotation may be recommended 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modified Phase 1 and Phase 2 if it meets all the conditions in the Phase Specific Requirements section of this document • *Absolutely no more than 2 people in each lane for individual lap swimming, and no more than 4 for competitive swim team practices for Modified Phase 1 and Phase 2 (refer to specific phase requirements)
	Wading pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide plenty of space to keep unrelated children separate • Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms • Lifeguarding • User rotation may be recommended 	
	Activity pools***	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide plenty of space to keep unrelated children separate 	

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms Lifeguarding User rotation may be recommended 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> **Waterpark like features regulated under WAC 246-262 are allowed in Phase 3 ***Activity pools with play features are not allowed to open until Phase 3 even if they are regulated under WAC 246-260 Lazy rivers are allowed to open in Modified Phase 1 and Phase 2 if the river feature is turned off. They are allowed to open in Phase 4 if the river feature is turned on. Phase 4 if more than 50 people
	Waterslides**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms Lifeguarding 	
	Splash pads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide plenty of space to keep unrelated children separate Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms User rotation may be recommended 	
	Surf pools**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow only one person to surf at a time Spectator control needed Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms Lifeguarding 	
	Wave pools** Lazy Rivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moving water makes it very difficult to maintain physical distancing Lazy rivers regulated under WAC 246-260 are allowed to open in Modified Phase 1 and Phase 2 if the river feature is turned off. Phase 4 if the river feature is turned on. Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms Lifeguarding User rotation may be recommended 	
	Diving pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only one person dives at a time and only one person in the diving well Spectator control needed Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms 	

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lifeguarding 	
	Spas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smaller spas may allow only one or two people at a time Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms Lifeguarding User rotation may be recommended 	
<p>Schools</p> <p>If open to the community. Student activities as part of the educational requirement must follow school district guidelines as well.</p>	Swimming pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One person per lane for lap swimming is recommended* Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms lifeguarding User rotation may be recommended 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modified Phase 1 and Phase 2 if it meets all the conditions in the Phase Specific Requirements section of this document *Absolutely no more than 2 people in each lane for individual lap swimming, and no more than 4 for competitive swim team practices for Modified Phase 1 and Phase 2 (refer to specific phase requirements) Phase 4 if >50 people
	Spas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smaller spas may allow only one or two people at a time Discourage people from using communal areas 	
	Diving pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only one person dives at a time and only one person in the diving well, otherwise physical distancing strictly followed Spectator control needed Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms lifeguarding 	
<p>Apartments</p> <p>Condominiums</p> <p>Mobile home parks</p> <p>HOAs</p> <p>Boarding homes</p> <p>Fraternity</p>	Swimming pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide plenty of space to keep unrelated children separate Educate/encourage patrons to practice physical distancing Discourage people from using communal areas User rotation may be recommended 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modified Phase 1 and Phase 2 if it meets all the conditions in the Phase Specific Requirements section of this document Phase 4 if >50 people
	Spas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smaller spas may allow only one or two people at a time 	

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Sorority		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discourage people from using communal areas 	
	Wading pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide plenty of space to keep unrelated children separate Educate/encourage patrons to practice physical distancing Discourage people from using communal areas User rotation may be recommended 	
Hotels/motels B&B Camp grounds RV parks	Swimming pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide plenty of space to keep unrelated children separate Educate/encourage patrons to practice physical distancing Discourage people from using communal areas User rotation may be recommended 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modified Phase 1 and Phase 2 if it meets all the conditions in the Phase Specific Requirements section of this document Phase 4 if >50 people
	Spas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smaller spas may allow only one or two people at a time Discourage people from using communal areas 	
	Wading pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide plenty of space to keep unrelated children separate Educate/encourage patrons to practice physical distancing Discourage people from using communal areas User rotation may be recommended 	
Float tanks	One person tank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice physical distancing and environmental hygiene described above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modified Phase 1 and Phase 2
	Multiple person tank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice physical distancing and environmental hygiene described above Floaters are from the same household 	
Designated Swim Areas		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical distancing encouraged/enforced by the owner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modified Phase 1 and Phase 2 if involving fewer

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(bathing beaches)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical distancing and disinfection for locker rooms, shower rooms, bathrooms • Lifeguarding • Discourage people from using communal areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • than 5 people outside your household • Phase 3 if involving 5 to 50 people • Phase 4 if involving more than 50 people
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More COVID-19 Information and Resources

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), [Governor Inslee's proclamations](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), and [how and when people should get tested](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

A person's race/ethnicity or nationality does not, itself, put them at greater risk of COVID-19. However, data are revealing that communities of color are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19- this is due to the effects of racism, and in particular, structural racism, that leaves some groups with fewer opportunities to protect themselves and their communities. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share accurate information with others to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- [WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WA State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [CDC Guidance for Public Pools, Hot Tubs, and Water Playgrounds During COVID-19](#)
- [Stigma Reduction Resources](#)

Have more questions about COVID-19? Call our hotline: **1-800-525-0127**, Monday – Friday, 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., Weekends: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. For interpretative services, **press #** when they answer and **say your language**. For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact a health care provider.

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