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# Operating Your Pool/Spa During The COVID-19 Pandemic

Spring is here and as the weather improves you may be wondering how to maintain your pool during the COVID-19 pandemic (for this letter, “pool” refers to all pools, spas/hot tubs, wading pools, splash pads and slide landing pools). Marion County Environmental Health would like to provide general guidance this year to help our operators that choose to either keep their pool open or closed during the upcoming months.

## Opening Your Pool

All pools/spas in operation must comply with the rules in OAR 333, [Division 60](#) & [Division 62](#) as well as any additional COVID-19 safety protocols. Many of the requirements for indoor and outdoor recreational activities that went into effect during the summer of 2020 still apply now:

### Distancing and Capacity:

- Arrange deck layout (chairs, tables and entry/exit areas) to encourage 6 feet of distancing.
- Unvaccinated pool users, both in and out the water, should stay at least 6 feet away from those that do not live in their household.
- Limit spa (hot tub) users to one household at a time, not to exceed 15 minutes.



	<b>Extreme Risk</b>	<b>High Risk</b>	<b>Moderate Risk</b>	<b>Low Risk</b>
<b>Indoor Pools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If facility is <math>\geq 500</math> ft<sup>2</sup>: Limit to 4 separate groups of up to 6 people with 25 feet physical distancing between each group when not in the pool</li> <li>• If facility is <math>&lt; 500</math> ft<sup>2</sup>: 1 person at a time</li> </ul>	10% maximum occupancy <b>or</b> 50 people total (whichever is larger)	20% Maximum occupancy <b>or</b> 100 people total (whichever is larger)	50% maximum occupancy
<b>Outdoor Pools</b>	100 people maximum	15% of maximum occupancy	25% maximum occupancy	50% maximum occupancy



## Who should have on a face covering?

- **Indoor Pools:** All people on the pool deck that are five years of age and older, not in the water and not fully vaccinated. This includes staff, volunteers, lifeguards, social distancing monitors, parents and others not actively engaged in pool activities.
  - Face coverings may be removed while eating/drinking if food and drinks are kept at least 4 feet away from the edge of the pool (8 feet away at general-use pools)
  - Your facility must have a system in place for checking each person's proof of vaccination BEFORE they are allowed to remove their mask.
- **Outdoor Pools:** Masks are not required while outdoors.



## Cleaning and Disinfection:

- Thoroughly clean all surfaces prior to reopening after extended closure.
- Restrooms should be cleaned daily and keep stocked with sanitary supplies.
- High touch point surfaces, including lounge chairs, door handles, handrails, tables, slides and pool toys should be disinfected frequently with an EPA approved COVID-19 disinfectant.



## Physical Distancing Monitor:

This seems to have been one of the most challenging requirements COVID-19 brought on our pool facilities. Be advised that a group or person cannot “monitor” themselves. Even if the pool is only open to one group at a time, a physical distancing monitor is still needed.

- This role can be held by a staff or volunteer that is at least 15 years old.
- The person does not need to remain on the pool deck at all times BUT does need to monitor the pool/spa frequently.
  - Equipment such as cameras may allow a facility to monitor physical distancing remotely.
- The monitor must prohibit the gathering of unvaccinated people in all areas of the pool.
- An on-duty lifeguard CANNOT serve as the physical distancing monitor.



## General:

- Stagger swim classes and group events to help reduce gathering of people in the pool area.
- You may consider sign-up slots for families to reserve the pool during specific times in order to maintain social distancing.
  - Consider scheduling a blocked period for cleaning/disinfecting of the pool area and testing of pool chemistry.
- Create a plan in case someone gets sick. This may include cleaning and disinfecting areas used by the sick person, providing an isolation area within the facility in the event

- that an ill person cannot leave immediately and notifying close contacts of their exposure.
- Posting signs on distancing requirements, cleaning policies and other COVID safety practices is highly encouraged.
  - If possible, screen staff and volunteers for COVID-19 prior to their shift.



## Keeping Your Pool Closed

If you are finding it difficult to follow the COVID-19 guidance and decided to keep your pool closed this season (or year) then consider the following tips:

- **Do Not Drain the Pool** – Removing water from a plaster pool will cause the plaster to dry out, creating cracks and indents in the pool shell. Draining the pool may also remove the water-weight that keeps the pool shell in the ground.
- **Maintain Water Quality** – To prevent algae growth in your pool and to avoid ruining your circulation equipment, it is important to still maintain water quality checks. Without people in the pool, the chemistry should be more stable and testing can be reduced to checking a couple times per week
  - **Free Chlorine** should be kept between 1-3 ppm.
  - **pH** should be kept around 7.2-7.5.
  - **Add an Algicide** to help fight algae growth.
- **Run the Pump** – It is recommended that you run the pool pump and circulation system for a couple hours every day.
- **Keep Water Heater On** – Colder water does not mix easily and prevent chemicals from circulating in the pool, causing pockets of algae growth. Cold water can also ruin the heater core, pool plaster, filters and pumps.
- **Brush The Pool** – Brush walls and vacuum a couple times per month.
- **Cover The Pool** – The pool cover will help prevent debris from getting into the water and will help heat and chlorine in the pool.
- **Secure the Enclosure** – Be sure all doors, gates and windows that allow access are durable, secure, closed and locked.

Please keep in mind that changes in risk levels and OHA guidance for both indoor and outdoor recreational establishments are often updated; you may visit <https://govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-COVID-19> for the most current information.

Once 70% of Oregonians aged 16 and older receive a first dose of a vaccine, most of the COVID-19 restrictions will be lifted. We encourage everyone to get vaccinated. Information about where to get vaccines in Marion County can be found here:

<https://www.co.marion.or.us/HLT/COVID-19/Pages/Default.aspx> or by calling 211.

Remember to pay your Pool/Spa license fee prior to operating this year. If you have questions about this material, please contact our mainline at 503-588-5346 or email

[EnvironmentalHealth@co.marion.or.us](mailto:EnvironmentalHealth@co.marion.or.us).