

CDC Atlanta

Guidance for Public Pools, Hot Tubs, and Water Playgrounds During COVID-19

Updated Feb. 1, 2021

Languages

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Guidance for Public Pools, Hot Tubs, and Water Playgrounds

CDC is not aware of any scientific reports of the virus that causes COVID-19 spreading to people through the water in pools, hot tubs, water playgrounds, or other treated aquatic venues.

The following guidance highlights steps operators of public treated aquatic venues can take to help protect their staff and patrons, both in and out of the water, and [prevent the spread](#) of the virus that causes COVID-19.

Public treated aquatic venues can be operated by:

- Apartment complexes
- Homeowners' associations
- Hotels and motels
- Membership clubs (for example, gyms)
- Schools
- Waterparks
- City or county governments

Operators of public treated aquatic venues can determine, in collaboration with [local health officials](#), if and how to implement this guidance, making adjustments to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community. This guidance is meant to supplement—not replace—any local, state, territorial, federal, or tribal laws, rules, or regulations with which operators must comply.

Know how the virus spreads to prevent the spread

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, most commonly [spreads](#) from person-to-person by respiratory droplets during [close physical contact](#) (within 6 feet or a few inches longer than a typical pool noodle, both in and out of the water).

The virus can sometimes spread from person-to-person by small droplets or virus particles that linger in the air for minutes to hours. This can happen most easily in enclosed spaces with [inadequate ventilation](#). In general, being outdoors and in spaces with good ventilation reduces the risk of exposure to infectious respiratory droplets. Infected people with or without [symptoms](#) can spread the virus. The virus spreads less commonly when a person touches an object or surface that has the virus on it and then touches his or her mouth, nose, or eyes.

Fortunately, there are several actions pool, hot tubs, and water playground operators can take to help lower the risk of spreading the virus among persons at aquatic venues.

Promoting Behaviors that Prevent the Spread of the Virus that Causes COVID-19

- **Staying Home or Isolating when Appropriate**
 - Educate staff and patrons about when they should [stay home](#) (if exposed to COVID-19) or [isolate](#) (if ill or infected with that virus that causes COVID-19) and when they can return to the venue.
 - Consult [CDC criteria for no longer needing to isolate or stay home](#) when developing policies on staff and patrons returning after having [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, testing positive for COVID-19, or being exposed to someone with COVID-19.
 - Develop policies that encourage staff to stay home or isolate without fear of being punished or losing their jobs and ensure staff is aware of these policies.
- **Social (or Physical) Distancing**
 - Encourage [social distancing](#)—staff and patrons should stay at least 6 feet (a few inches longer than a typical pool noodle, both in and out of the water) away from people they don't live with. This includes not gathering at the ends of swim lanes, behind starting blocks, or on stairs into the water or up to the diving board. There is no standard formula to determine how many people can maintain social distancing in and around the water.
 - **Exceptions to social distancing should be made to**
 - **Rescue a distressed swimmer, perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), or provide first aid; or**
 - **Evacuate the water or aquatic facility (such as at gyms) due to an emergency.**
 - Stagger use of shared spaces (such as limiting the number of people in the water, bathrooms, locker rooms, and breakrooms). For example, have patrons sign up, online or by phone, for swim or beach time slots.
 - Don't allow staff or patrons to gather while waiting for access. This means staying at least 6 feet (a few inches longer than a typical pool noodle, both in and out of the water) away from people they don't live with, preferably outside or in a well-ventilated space.

- Stagger start and end times of swim lessons and aquatics classes to allow for [social distancing](#) on the deck.
 - Assign separate entries and exits to encourage everyone to move in one direction, if possible.
 - Limit occupancy of enclosed spaces (such as bathrooms, locker rooms, and breakrooms) to make it easy for staff and patrons to stay at least 6 feet (a few inches longer than a typical pool noodle, both in and out of the water) away from people they don't live with.
 - Don't allow staff or patrons to gather while waiting for access. This means staying at least 6 feet (a few inches longer than a typical pool noodle, both in and out of the water) away from people they don't live with, preferably outside or in a well-ventilated space.
 - Discourage activities, such as eating and drinking (on dry land), that require removal of cloth masks unless at least 6 feet (a few inches longer than a typical pool noodle, both in and out of the water) away from people they don't live with.
 - Educate staff and patrons about arriving "swim" ready (for example, showering before going to the aquatic facility). Enforce this and other [healthy swimming steps](#).
 - Ask parents or caregivers to consider if their children can stay at least 6 feet (a few inches longer than a typical pool noodle, both in and out of the water) apart from people they don't live with before taking them to a public treated aquatic venue.
 - Limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations.
 - If aquatic facility is used by other organizations, encourage them to also follow this guidance.
 - Encourage staff and patrons to carpool or vanpool only with people they live with.
- **Cloth Masks (Not Goggles, etc.)**
 - Encourage use of cloth [cloth masks](#) among staff and patrons. Cloth masks should be worn in addition to staying at least 6 feet (a few inches longer than a typical pool noodle, both in and out of the water) apart from people you don't live with.
 - Advise staff and patrons wearing cloth masks **[not to wear them in the water](#)**. A wet cloth mask can make it difficult to breathe and likely will not work correctly. This means it is particularly important to maintain [social distancing](#) when in the water.
 - Encourage everyone to bring a second (or extra) cloth mask in case the first one gets wet.
 - Provide staff and patrons with information on how to [properly wear, take off, and clean cloth masks](#). Remind staff and patrons not to touch their cloth masks when wearing them.

[Masks should not be placed on](#)

- Children younger than 2 years old or
- Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

Consider [adaptations and alternatives](#) for children and adults, with certain disabilities, who are unable to tolerate or properly wear a mask.

- **Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**
 - Encourage [handwashing](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available
 - Adults and older children who can safely use [hand sanitizer](#) should use one that contains at least 60% alcohol. Place hand sanitizer in visible, frequently used locations (such as at entrances and exits).
 - [Supervise younger children](#) when they use hand sanitizer to prevent ingestion or sanitizer splashing or getting into their eyes.
 - Hand sanitizers might not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy, so wiping off sunscreen before applying hand sanitizer might be helpful. Reapply sunscreen after hands are dry.
 - Encourage everyone not to spit and to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of their elbows, throw used tissues in the trash, and wash their hands immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use [hand sanitizer](#) that contains at least 60% alcohol, if soap and water are not readily available.
- **Adequate Supplies**
 - Support steps that [prevent the spread](#) of the virus by providing accessible sinks and enough supplies for people to wash or sanitize their hands and cover their coughs and sneezes. Supplies include cloth or disposable masks (if possible), soap and water, a way to dry hands (paper towels or air hand dryer), tissues, dispensers, no-touch/foot-pedal trash cans (preferably covered), and [hand sanitizer](#) containing at least 60% alcohol.
- **Signs and Messages**
 - Post [signs](#), in highly visible locations (such as at entrances and in bathrooms), to promote steps that [prevent the spread](#) of the virus (such as staying home, practicing social distancing, and properly wearing a cloth mask).
 - Broadcast [announcements](#) on [preventing the spread](#) of the virus on PA systems or by megaphone.
 - Include the steps that [prevent the spread](#) of the virus when communicating with patrons (such as on websites, in emails, and on [social media](#)).
 - Check out other resources (such as [videos](#)) in a variety of languages in CDC's [communications resources hub](#).

Maintaining Healthy Environments

- **Ventilation in Buildings**
 - Increase [ventilation](#), intake of outdoor air and exhaust of indoor air, to reduce the concentration of virus particles in indoor air. Different approaches to achieve this can be taken. Implementing multiple approaches at the same time increases overall effectiveness. The building owner should consult a Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) professional to determine which approaches to take.
- **Ventilation of Indoor Air in Aquatic Spaces**
 - Ensure indoor air handling system for aquatic spaces is operating properly and providing acceptable indoor air quality for each space. Ensure restroom exhaust fans are functional and operating at full capacity when the building is occupied.

- Increase the percentage of outdoor air as high as possible while maintaining acceptable temperature and humidity control.
- Consider other steps to increase the introduction and circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, including, changing the air handling system's time clock to introduce code ventilation 24 hours per day (no off cycle).
- Improve central air filtration:
 - Increase air filtration to a MERV-13 or as high as possible without significantly diminishing design airflow.
 - Check filters to ensure they are within service life and appropriately installed.
 - Inspect filter housing and racks to ensure appropriate filter fit and minimize filter bypass.
 - Verify proper airflow through the air handler after upgraded filter installation.
- When swimming events are scheduled to occur, consider running a purge sequence starting 3 hours before an event and turn the system back to normal [ventilation](#) 1 hour before the event to allow environmental stabilization, if the air handling system has a purge mode. Run the purge mode again for 2 hours after the event.
- Consider using ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) as a supplement to help inactivate SARS-CoV-2, especially if options for increasing the delivery of clean air are limited. In-duct UVGI systems can help enhance air cleaning inside central ventilation systems. Consult with a reputable UVGI manufacturer or an experienced UVGI system designer prior to installing these systems. These professionals can assist by doing necessary calculations, making fixture selections, properly installing the system, and testing for proper operation specific to the setting.
- **Physical Barriers and Guides**
 - Provide physical cues or guides (such as lane lines in the water and tables or chairs on the deck) and visual cues (such as posted signs or decals or tape on floors or sidewalks) to encourage everyone to stay at least 6 feet (a few inches longer than a typical pool noodle, both in and out of the water) away (both in and out of the water) from people they don't live with.
- **Cleaning and Disinfection**
 - [Develop, implement, and fine-tune a plan](#) to [clean and then disinfect](#) shared objects (such as tabletops, lounge chairs, pool noodles, and kickboards) between users and frequently touched surfaces (such as doorknobs, handrails, drinking water fountains, faucets, other bathroom surfaces, diaper-changing stations, touch screens, and structures for climbing or playing) at least daily. The more frequently a surface is touched by different people, the more frequently it should be cleaned and then disinfected.
 - Use disinfectants from EPA's [List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 \(COVID-19\)](#)[external icon](#). Consult with the manufacturers and the architect or design engineer of the aquatic facility to decide which EPA-approved disinfectants are best for shared objects and surfaces, respectively.
 - [Ensure safe and effective](#) use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products by reading and following label directions. This includes wearing protective equipment (such as gloves and goggles), not mixing chemical products, applying them at directed concentration for directed amount of time, and storing them securely away from children and animals.

- Document [cleaning and disinfection](#) of shared objects and surfaces and post in highly visible locations (such as at entrances) for staff and patrons to see.
- Set up a system so that shared objects that need to be cleaned and then disinfected are kept separate from shared objects that are already cleaned and then disinfected. For example, label containers for used and potentially contaminated shared objects and label containers for cleaned and disinfected shared objects.
- Launder towels and clothing according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water temperature and dry items completely.
- Protect shared objects that have been cleaned and disinfected from becoming contaminated before use.
- **Shared Objects**
 - Discourage staff and patrons from sharing items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect or that are meant to come in contact with the face (such as goggles, nose clips, and snorkels).
 - Discourage staff and patrons from sharing items (such as food, equipment, toys, and supplies) with people they don't live with.
 - Ensure adequate equipment for staff and patrons (such as life jackets) to minimize sharing and [clean and then disinfect](#) between users.

Maintaining Healthy Operations

- **Protect Staff at Increased Risk for Severe COVID-19 Illness**
 - Offer options to staff at [increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness](#) to limit their risk of infection (such as modified job responsibilities that limit interactions with people they don't live with).
 - Put in place policies to protect the privacy of people with underlying health conditions that put them at [increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness](#), in accordance with applicable local, state, territorial, federal, and tribal privacy and confidentiality laws, rules, and regulations.
 - Limit staff and patrons to people who live in the local geographic area (e.g., community, city, town, or county) to reduce risk of spread from areas with higher levels of COVID-19.
- **Lifeguards and Water Safety**
 - Ensure that lifeguards who are actively lifeguarding are not also expected to monitor [social distancing](#), use of cloth [masks](#), or [handwashing](#) of others. Assign these monitoring duties to staff that is not actively lifeguarding.
- **Regulatory Awareness**
 - Operate and manage the public treated aquatic venue in accordance with local, state, territorial, federal, and tribal laws, rules, and regulations.
 - Consult with [local health officials](#) before considering holding an event (such as team practice, swim meets and other sports competitions, swim lessons, and pool parties) and comply with limits on gathering sizes.
- **Gatherings**
 - Limit gatherings (both in and out of the water) if [social distancing](#) cannot be maintained.
 - Check out additional [youth sports guidance](#).
 - Stagger arrival and departure times to help maintain [social distancing](#), if planned gatherings must be conducted.
- **Alterations of public treated aquatic venues**

- Consult the company or engineer that designed the aquatic venue before altering aquatic features (for example, slides and structures designed for climbing or playing).
- **Staffing**
 - Stagger or rotate shifts to limit the number of staff present at the same time, but be sure to meet health and safety standards.
 - Schedule same team of staff to always work together, if possible. This can help [prevent the spread](#) of the virus among staff by limiting the interaction among staff because members of one team don't work with members of another team.
- **Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact**
 - Designate a staff member to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. All staff and patrons should know who this person is and how to contact him or her.
- **Communication Systems**
 - Put systems—consistent with applicable local, state, territorial, federal, and tribal privacy and confidentiality laws, rules, and regulations—in place to
 - Have staff and patrons notify the designated COVID-19 point of contact if they have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, have been diagnosed with COVID-19, are waiting for COVID-19 test results, or were [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days.
 - Notify staff and the public of cases or aquatic facility closures or restrictions (such as limited hours of operation or limited number of patrons) to [prevent the spread](#) of the virus.
 - **Leave (Time Off) Policies**
 - Implement flexible sick leave policies and practices that enable employees to [stay home](#) or [isolate](#) when they have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, have been diagnosed with COVID-19, are waiting for test results, have been [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days, or are [caring for someone who is sick](#).
 - Examine and revise policies for leave and employee compensation.
 - Leave policies should be flexible and not punish people for taking time off and should allow sick employees to stay home and away from co-workers. Leave policies should also account for employees who need to stay home with their children (such as during school or childcare closures).
 - Develop policies for return-to-work after COVID-19 illness. [CDC criteria for no longer needing to isolate or stay home](#) can inform these policies.
 - **Back-Up Staffing Plan**
 - Monitor absenteeism of staff and create a roster of trained back-up staff.
 - **Staff Training**
 - Train staff on all health and safety protocols.
 - Conduct training virtually or ensure that [social distancing](#) is maintained during in-person training.
 - **Recognize Signs and Symptoms**
 - Conduct daily health checks or ask staff and patrons to conduct self-checks (such as temperature checks or [symptom](#) screening), if possible.
 - Do health checks safely and respectfully and in accordance with any applicable local, state, territorial, federal, and tribal privacy and confidentiality laws, rules, and regulations. Operators may use CDC examples of [screening methods](#).

Preparing for When Someone Becomes Sick Onsite

Staff and patrons should [isolate](#) if they have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 or tested positive for COVID-19 and [stay home](#) if [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19. If a staff member or patron experiences COVID-19 [symptoms](#) at a public treated aquatic venue, take the following steps to help [prevent the spread](#):

- **Develop a Plan Ahead of Time**
 - Focus plan on isolating and, if needed, arranging transportation for the person sick with COVID-19 [symptoms](#), [cleaning and then disinfecting](#) areas used by the sick person, and notifying [local health officials](#) and [close contacts](#).
 - Train staff on plan and what steps to take.
- **Isolate and Transport Those Who Become Sick Onsite**
 - Separate immediately staff and patrons with COVID-19 [symptoms](#), from others. The sick person should go home and follow [CDC guidance for caring for oneself](#) or to a healthcare facility. If sick person cannot immediately leave,
 - Have sick person go to designated isolation space where anyone can go if they have COVID-19 [symptoms](#). This designated space should be outside or a well-ventilated area and at least 6 feet (a few inches longer than a typical pool noodle, both in and out of the water) away from other people. If the designated space is indoor, be sure to consult an HVAC professional ahead of time about how to increase [ventilation](#) (such as opening windows) if the space is used for isolation.
 - Encourage the sick person to [wear a cloth mask](#) if it is safe for him or her to do so.
 - Provide a dedicated bathroom for the sick person to use if possible, and make sure others do not use it until it can be properly [cleaned and disinfected](#).
 - Instruct sick staff and patrons not to return until they have met [CDC criteria for no longer needing to isolate or stay home](#).
- **Clean and Disinfect**
 - Block off areas (such as isolation room, bathroom, or lifeguard stations) used by the sick person and do not use these areas until after [cleaning and then disinfecting](#)
 - Wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and then disinfecting. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible. Use disinfectants from EPA's [List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 \(COVID-19\)](#)[external icon](#).
 - [Ensure safe and effective](#) use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products by reading and following label directions. This includes wearing protective equipment (such as gloves and goggles), not mixing chemical products, applying them at directed concentration for directed amount of time, and storing them securely away from children and animals.
- **Notify Local Health Officials and Close Contacts**
 - Notify immediately [local health officials](#) about the person who became sick with COVID-19 onsite, in accordance with local, state, territorial, federal, and tribal laws, rules, and regulations.
 - Work with [local health officials](#) to instruct staff and patrons, who have been [exposed](#) (within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or more within 24 hours) to the person who became sick with COVID-19 onsite, to stay home, [self-monitor for symptoms](#), and follow CDC guidance [if they experience symptoms](#).

- Maintain the sick person’s confidentiality in accordance with the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)^{external icon} and other applicable local, state, territorial, federal, and tribal privacy and confidentiality laws, rules, and regulations.

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Communication Resources



FOLLOW THESE 5 SAFETY STEPS to keep us all healthy

- 1 STAY HOME IF YOU DON'T FEEL WELL**
Or if you tested positive for COVID-19 or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days
- 2 STAY 6 FEET AWAY FROM PEOPLE**
who don't live with you, both in and out of the water and avoid sharing items with other people

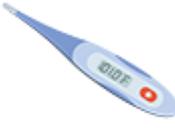


[5 Safety Steps \(English Poster\)](#)

[Follow these 5 safety steps to keep us all healthy](#)
[pdf icon](#)[PDF - 240 KB]

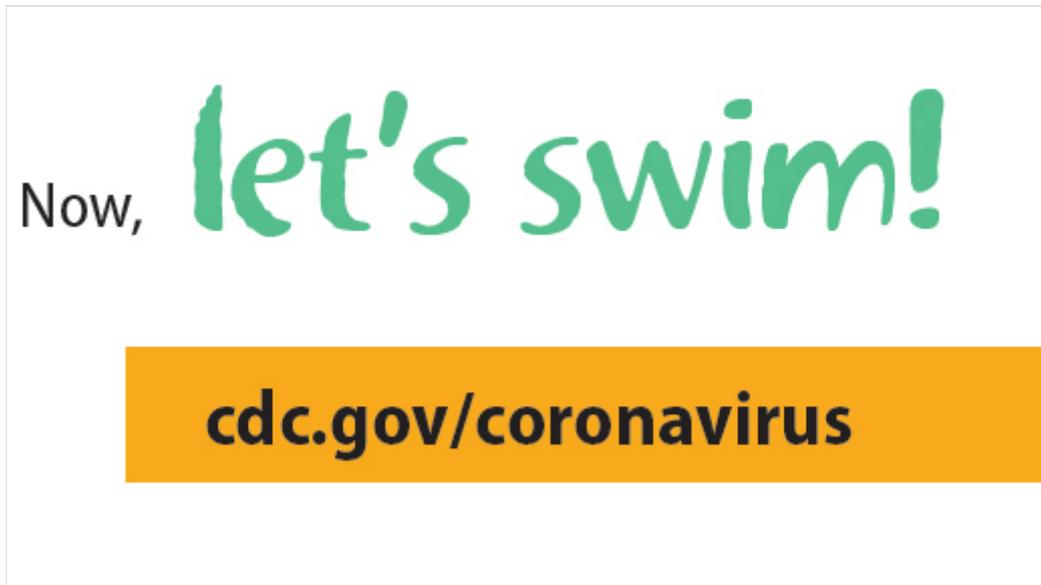
TOME ESTAS 5 MEDIDAS DE SEGURIDAD para que todos nos mantengamos sanos

- 1 QUÉDESE EN CASA SI NO SE SIENTE BIEN**
O si la prueba del COVID-19 le da positivo o estuvo expuesto a alguien con COVID-19 en los últimos 14 días
- 2 MANTÉNGASE A 6 PIES DE OTRAS PERSONAS**
que no vivan con usted, tanto dentro como fuera del agua, y evite compartir cosas con otros
- 3 USE UNA CUBIERTA DE TELA PARA LA CARA**



[5 Safety Steps \(Spanish Poster\)](#)

[Follow these 5 safety steps to keep us all healthy](#)
pdf icon [\[PDF - 237 KB\]](#)



[Letter to Patrons](#)

[Send out a customized letter to your patrons to inform them about steps taken to protect staff and patrons](#)
word icon [\[DOCX - 62 KB\]](#)

A poster titled "DAILY CHECKLIST FOR STAFF" in white text on a dark green background. Below the title, it says "Public pools, hot tubs, and water playgrounds". To the right of the title is a circular icon of a clipboard with a checklist. Below the title, there are three checklist items, each with a square checkbox:

- Remind staff, patrons, and swimmers to **WASH THEIR HANDS OFTEN** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol
- ENCOURAGE WEARING CLOTH FACE COVERINGS** for staff and patrons **2 years and over** who are not swimming
- MAKE SURE THERE ARE ENOUGH SUPPLIES**, such as soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, tissues, and no-touch trash cans

To the right of the second and third items is a circular icon of a person wearing a blue face covering and a red hat.

[Checklist for Staff \(English Poster\)](#)

[Daily checklist for staff of public pools, hot tubs, and water playgrounds](#)
pdf icon [\[PDF - 253 KB\]](#)

LISTA DE VERIFICACIÓN DIARIA PARA EL PERSONAL

Piscinas y bañeras de hidromasaje públicas y áreas de juegos con agua



- Recuérdelos al personal, los clientes y los nadadores que **SE LAVEN LAS MANOS FRECUENTEMENTE** con agua y jabón por al menos 20 segundos o usen un desinfectante de manos que contenga al menos un 60 % de alcohol
- ANIME AL USO DE CUBIERTAS DE TELA PARA LA CARA** para el personal y para los clientes **que tengan 2 años de edad o más** y que no estén nadando
- ASEGÚRESE DE QUE HAYA SUFICIENTES SUMINISTROS**, como jabón, desinfectante de manos, toallas de papel, pañuelos desechables y contenedores de basura que no tengan que tocarse



[Checklist for Staff \(Spanish Poster\)](#)

[Daily checklist for staff of public pools, hot tubs, and water playgrounds pdf icon\[PDF - 183 KB\]](#)

FOLLOW THESE 5 SAFETY STEPS to keep us all healthy

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who don't live with you, both in and out of the water and avoid sharing items with other people



[5 Safety Steps \(English Poster\)](#)

[Follow these 5 safety steps to keep us all healthy pdf icon\[PDF - 240 KB\]](#)

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3 USE UNA CUBIERTA DE TELA PARA LA CARA



[5 Safety Steps \(Spanish Poster\)](#)

[Follow these 5 safety steps to keep us all healthy](#)
[pdf icon](#) [\[PDF - 237 KB\]](#)

Now, **let's swim!**

cdc.gov/coronavirus

[Letter to Patrons](#)

[Send out a customized letter to your patrons to inform them about steps taken to protect staff and patrons](#)
[word icon](#) [\[DOCX - 62 KB\]](#)

DAILY CHECKLIST FOR STAFF

Public pools, hot tubs, and water playgrounds



- Remind staff, patrons, and swimmers to **WASH THEIR HANDS OFTEN** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol
- ENCOURAGE WEARING CLOTH FACE COVERINGS** for staff and patrons **2 years and over** who are not swimming
- MAKE SURE THERE ARE ENOUGH SUPPLIES**, such as soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, tissues, and no-touch trash cans



[Checklist for Staff \(English Poster\)](#)

[Daily checklist for staff of public pools, hot tubs, and water playgrounds pdf icon](#)[\[PDF - 253 KB\]](#)

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[Follow these 5 safety steps to keep us all healthy pdf icon](#)[\[PDF - 240 KB\]](#)

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para que todos nos mantengamos sanos

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USE UNA CUBIERTA DE TELA PARA LA CARA



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cdc.gov/coronavirus

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word icon [\[DOCX - 62 KB\]](#)



- 1
- 2

Other Resources

Lakes, oceans, and other recreational water

There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to humans through the use of [recreational waters](#). Follow [safe swimming practices](#) along with physical distancing and [everyday preventative actions](#) to protect yourself.

CDC COVID-19 Resources

- [Cleaning and Disinfection](#)
- [Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- [COVID-19 Prevention](#)
- [Masks](#)
- [Social Distancing](#)
- [COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [CDC Communication Resources](#)
- [Community Mitigation](#)
- [Considerations for Public Beaches](#)

Other CDC Resources

- [CDC Healthy Swimming](#)
- [CDC Steps of Healthy Swimming](#)
- [Handwashing Information](#)

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