

Cuomo allowing gyms to reopen Monday

Masks required at all times; sign-in form necessary; screening suggested



Graphics courtesy of the Office of Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo

Guidance for Gyms and Fitness Centers

- **Capacity:** 33% occupancy limit.
- **Access:** Sign-in with contact information and health screening required.
- **PPE:** Appropriate face coverings required at all times.
- **Distancing:** 6 feet of separation at all times.
- **Hygiene/Cleaning:** Cleaning and disinfection supplies made available to customers; shared equipment cleaned after every use; staff must also be available to clean and disinfect equipment in between uses; rental equipment must be cleaned and disinfected between customer use.
- **Classes:** By appointment/reservation only; maximum class capacity capped at number of people that can adhere to the 6-foot social distancing rules, but in no case more than 33% of the typical class size (i.e., leave stations, cycles, etc. vacant); classes should be scheduled to allow additional time for cleaning and disinfection in between each session.
- **Amenities:** Water bottle refill stations permitted, but not shared water fountains; communal showers are closed, but individual showers/stalls can remain open so long as they are cleaned in between use.
- **Air Handling Systems:** Gyms should operate at MERV-13 or greater; if they are unable to operate at that level, they must have heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) professional document their inability to do so and adopt additional ventilation and mitigation protocols from American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- **Inspection:** Local health departments shall inspect before or within two weeks of the gym/fitness center opening to ensure compliance.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Monday announced gyms in New York can reopen beginning Monday, Aug. 24.

“Gyms, the guidance goes out today on gyms. Basically, the outline is 33% capacity,” he said. “There are health requirements that are in the guidelines that have to be maintained to their ventilation requirements. This is a whole new topic, where we can actually do a lot of good work; we are in New York, with the HVAC systems and the filtration.”

He added, “One of the requirements is mandating masks at all times. Gyms can open as soon as Aug. 24. But the locality must open them by Sept. 2. The localities have a role here: They have to inspect the gyms before they open, or within two weeks of their opening, to make sure they’re meeting all the requirements. So, that variation is to give localities time, if the localities need it. So, if the localities can get the inspections done or be ready to inspect, then they can open up Aug. 24. If a locality can’t get ready to do inspections, then they get another week; they can do it Sept. 2.”

“Localities can also determine whether or not the gym has classes inside it. Some gyms have classes. Localities can decide whether or not those classes can be undertaken. The local elected will make the decision in a jurisdiction, and the local health departments must inspect before or within two weeks to make sure all the guidelines are in place.”

Secretary to the Governor Melissa DeRosa provided additional details.

“In gyms, we’re requiring masks at all time. Whereas in indoor dining, by definition, the patrons aren’t wearing masks – you’re sitting at a table; you’re without a mask,” she said. “And one of the major issues that we found when the governor stepped in with the SLA becoming much more aggressive is that people were drinking, they were standing, they were commingling – people were letting their guard down. And so, this is a different situation. But we are mandating masks at all time.”

“There has to be a sign-in form so that you know exactly who’s coming into the gym at all times, in case – God forbid – there’s a positive, you can easily contact trace back. We’re recommending that they do screening at the door, so that’s going to be something that’s in the regulation. So, that could be temperature checks.”

“And then we’re also requiring, as the governor said, the MERV-13 filter, which has been found to be highly effective.”

“So, we think all those things, in combination with the 33%, is something that we feel comfortable with. And if, for any reason, that ends up being a problem, then we will roll back.”

Some fitness facilities and independent contractors were offering outdoor workout sessions as they waited permission to reopen for in-person sessions.

Cuomo said, “The gyms are going to say these are difficult guidelines – and they are. The mandatory masks, you know, the mask is so effective – and it’s such a sin that this nation still has not mandated masks. But a lot of gyms, and a lot of people, are gonna say, ‘I don’t want to be on a treadmill with a mask,’ you know, but that’s a very effective piece.”

“To Melissa’s point, you have to sign in and sign out. So, if there is a spread, you have a full list – the contact tracing is basically done for you already. You go right to the list: Who was there that day, what time were they there, etc. So, these are very tight guidelines.”

He noted, “Gyms are one of the areas where you have to be very careful. And we know that. So, research what has happened in gyms all across the country; research what the best protocol is according to the health officials; and implement the best guidelines – which is exactly what we’ve done. And health officials and (physical) space officials ... have helped us come up with these guidelines. They came up with the 33%; the ventilation specifications; the cleanliness, how often the equipment has to be

cleaned, etc. If it’s not done right, it can be a problem.”

He stressed local municipalities “have to inspect the gyms; because how do you know the gyms are following the guidelines? You don’t know. And we just went through this with bars and restaurants – by the way.”

“That’s my trepidation – you want to know my honest trepidation – you come up with guidelines,

you say to the localities, ‘You have to do the compliance.’ That’s their primary function in all of this. That was our initial separation responsibility.”

“The state will make, frankly, the hard decisions. I’ll say the businesses have to close. I’ll say the gyms have to close. I’ll say the bars have to close. Let them blame me. You, local governments, have to do the compliance and enforcement work. And even then you can blame me. But you have to go to the bar, and you have to go to the restaurant, and now you have to go to the gym.”

“And if they’re not following the order, you hand them a piece of paper that says, ‘You’re closed, because you violated Gov. Cuomo’s regulation. You have a problem, call Gov. Cuomo.’ Compliance is what I’m concerned about – and that’s up to them.”

More Details

In a press release Monday afternoon, Cuomo’s camp stated, “Outside of New York City, the county’s chief executive – county executive, administrator, manager, or chair of the local elected legislative body – will determine whether gym reopening needs to be postponed.”

“Localities can also determine whether gyms postpone resumption of indoor classes. In New York City, the mayor and, throughout the rest of the state, the county’s chief executive may decide to opt-out of indoor group fitness and aquatic classes within their jurisdiction, postponing their resumption until a later date. Local health departments must inspect gyms prior to reopening, or within two weeks of reopening, to ensure strict adherence to Department of Health guidance.”

What About Movies?

A reporter asked Cuomo about providing guidance for industries that remain closed, most notably movie theaters.

The governor said reopenings have been based on level of risk, wherein essential businesses with low risk were the first to get the

go-ahead, with other industries following, down to least essential and most at-risk fields.

“A movie theater ... on a relative scale, a movie theater is less essential and it poses a high risk,” Cuomo said. “It is congregative. It’s one ventilation system. You’re seated there for a long period of time. ... Even if you’re 50% capacity, where there’s one seat between the two of you, two seats between the two of you, this is a risky situation.”

Bowling Alleys Now Open

Last Friday, Cuomo provided welcome news to bowlers across New York state.

“Bowling alleys will be allowed to open on Monday,” he said in a conference call. “Fifty percent occupancy; you must have a face covering; every other lane closed. The parties stay with their party at the lane that they’re bowling. The establishment has to have cleaning and disinfection and disinfecting protocols in place – especially on the shared and the rented equipment.”

“Food service, alcohol service, only by wait service at the party’s location. So, you’re at a lane, you’re bowling, you can order food, you can order alcohol. They come to you. You don’t go to a bar, you don’t go to a food concession; they come to you.”

Gyms

Guidelines out today

33% — Health — HVAC

Mandate masks at all times

As soon as August 24th

But by September 2nd

Localities can determine whether gyms hold indoor classes

Local elected

Local health department inspections before or within two weeks of opening



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