

Responsible Reopening for Private Gyms and Studios

In response to the global Coronavirus pandemic, we have created several proactive procedures to help minimize the risk of virus spread within our facilities. These safety steps were developed from CDC and DOH guidelines, our standard operating procedures, and input from other small gym owners in Lancaster and Chester counties. These steps along with the data showing that the fitness industry (including big box gyms) does not create a significant contribution to the spread of COVID-19 should serve as evidence that our industry can safely open and conduct in-person business. Moreover, the risk of shuttering facilities like ours clearly outweighs the risk of safe reopening. Our industry is essential in maintaining both mental and physical health.

“The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has been associated with mental health challenges related to the morbidity and mortality caused by the disease and to mitigation activities, including the impact of physical distancing and stay-at-home orders.* Symptoms of anxiety disorder and depressive disorder increased considerably in the United States during April–June of 2020, compared with the same period in 2019 (1,2). To assess mental health, substance use, and suicidal ideation during the pandemic, representative panel surveys were conducted among adults aged ≥18 years across the United States during June 24–30, 2020. Overall, 40.9% of respondents reported at least one adverse mental or behavioral health condition, including symptoms of anxiety disorder or depressive disorder (30.9%), symptoms of a trauma- and stressor-related disorder (TSRD) related to the pandemic† (26.3%), and having started or increased substance use to cope with stress or emotions related to COVID-19 (13.3%).” [Per the CDC](#)

We know that 64.2 million Americans had a gym membership last year (per IHRSA). With national fitness business closures encroaching 40%, that leaves 25.68 million Americans without a gym. This is over 6 million more Americans without a place to work on their mental and physical health than have been diagnosed with the virus (nearly 19 million). With American obesity already at an all-time high and mental health disorders entering crisis levels during the pandemic there must be a solution.

The CDC does not recognize gyms as a major contributor of the spread of COVID-19. IHRSA recently published that in approximately 50 million check-ins at fitness clubs over a 3 month period there has been a transmission rate of 0.0023% - and that is including big box clubs! We also know that 1 in 5 Americans struggles with a mental health disorder. Furthermore, we know that mental health illness puts people at a 40% higher risk of cardiovascular and metabolic disease.

According to the NCBI/NIH “A growing body of evidence indicates that obesity is strongly and independently associated with adverse outcomes of COVID-19, including death. By combining emerging knowledge of the pathological processes involved in COVID-19 with insights into the mechanisms underlying the adverse health consequences of obesity, we present some hypotheses regarding the deleterious impact of obesity on the course of

COVID-19. These hypotheses are testable and could guide therapeutic and preventive interventions. As obesity is now almost ubiquitous and no vaccine for COVID-19 is currently available, even a modest reduction in the impact of obesity on mortality and morbidity from this viral infection could have profound consequences for public health.” While we have vaccines emerging, the underlying impacts and facts remain the same. “[The Strong Association of Obesity with Adverse Outcomes in COVID-19 Is Real and Relatively Specific to a Subset of Viral Pneumonias](#)” [Per NCBI/NIH](#)

THE REAL LIFE STATISTICS?

332,000 US deaths from COVID-19 (14,915 in PA)

655,381 US deaths from Heart Disease in 2018 (per CDC website) (32,312 in PA)

According to the American Heart Association, the best ways to prevent heart disease are

1. Eating healthy

2. Physical activity

Both of which we, and facilities like ours, help others accomplish.

Precautions must be taken. BUT, WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO TAKE CARE OF THE HEALTH OF OUR PEOPLE.

Here are steps that we can take reopen safely and provide our clients with the opportunity to work on their health:

- Standard Entry Procedures:
 - Signage - masks required, wash/sanitize hands, standard health questions (if you feel ill, have been in contact with anyone with COVID-19 you should leave)
 - Temperature checks and hand washing/sanitizing
 - Change shoes or utilize a shoe sanitizing mat/station to prevent cross-contamination (in a functional training facility we spend a lot of time on the floor)
- Sessions By Appointment:
 - Controls the number of people in the facility and provides tracking
- Healthy Ventilation:
 - Installing a UV filtration system in traditional HVAC systems for facilities with ductwork/AC
 - Fresh Air Ventilation System (monitors CO2 levels, exhausts out “bad air”, brings in fresh air) for warehouse style facilities with no HVAC/ductwork (such as our facility - emPower Training Systems)
 - Continuous fresh air flow - at least 1 garage door and 1 other door that remain open at all times
- Social Distancing:
 - Operating under 25% capacity (facilities such as emPower Training Systems regularly operate well below this. We can operate the majority of our business at less than 10% capacity - 3,500sf training floor with 50sf

per person would allow for 70 clients. We operate training with a maximum of 4 clients, 1 open gym participant, and 1 coach. Allowing over 583sf per person with 14+ foot ceilings)*

- No equipment sharing
- Pods - Unlike traditional clubs, we are set up in a way that clients can stay in 1 general area. This area/pod can be clearly marked and ensures a minimum social distance of 6ft.
 - Most of us have the ability and already do provide much more distance
 - No “hands on” correction from coaches/trainers
- Cleaning:
 - All equipment used is thoroughly cleaned after each session
 - Every pod has a cleaning bucket with EPA certified disinfectant (for Coronavirus), disposable wipes/towels, and hand sanitizer OR use of a handheld UV light device to sanitize
- Additional steps may be taken by facilities as they see fit

We have been told to “Follow the science.” The science does not support the closure of this industry. In fact, it shows just how essential we are. Ultimately, each owner/manager knows what is best for their facility and clients. We are in this industry to aid in the health and well-being of those that put their trust in us. If we act with this guiding principle in mind, reopening is not only safe, but it is essential.

**25% capacity justification*

IHRSA suggests 48sf pp for group fitness (7ft box or 8ft circle diameter)

A 6ft circle (actual current social distancing recommendation) is only 28sf. At 48sf we provide almost DOUBLE the guidelines. At 25% capacity we reach nearly 7x the social distancing guidelines set forth by the CDC and most training gyms can easily run the majority of their business within these parameters!