



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago  
Ministry of Health

# THE NEW NORMAL

Gyms and Fitness Centres

June 2020

# Contents

Contents.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
1. Background .....	4
2. Objective of these Guidelines .....	5
3. Legal and Policy Framework.....	5
4. The Guidelines for Gyms and Fitness Centres.....	5
4.1.1 Facility Management.....	6
4.1.2 Personal Hygiene.....	8
4.1.3 Staff Member or Patron/Client.....	9
4.1.4 Gym and Fitness Centre Operations .....	11
4.1.5 Responsibility of Owner .....	13
4.1.6 Responsibility of Client/User .....	14
5. Implementation of the Guidelines.....	14
6. Monitoring and Evaluation.....	14
7. References.....	15
8. Appendices .....	16
8.1.1 Legal Notice No. 34 (Corrigendum) .....	16
8.1.2 Legal Notice No. 34 .....	17
8.1.3 Legal Notice No. 35 .....	19
8.1.4 Quarantine Act Chap. 28:05 7 (1) to (3).....	20

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1. Dr. Roshan Parasram, Chief Medical Officer;
2. Mr. Lawrence Jaisingh, Director, Health Policy, Research and Planning;
3. Dr. Maryam Abdool-Richards, Principal Medical Officer, Institutions
4. Dr. Rajeev P. Nagassar, Medical Microbiologist; Eastern Regional Health Authority and
5. Ms. Jenise Tyson, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Health Policy, Research and Planning.

# 1. Background

Pandemic outbreaks such as COVID-19 have the potential to destabilize and disrupt health systems and may have a profound effect on all aspects of a country's economy and the mental and physical health of the population.

On March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared COVID-19 to be a Pandemic and as at June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020, there were 8,061,550 confirmed cases with 440,290 deaths across 213 countries (WHO Situational Report No. 149).

In Trinidad and Tobago, the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and as at June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020, there were one hundred and twenty-three (123) positive cases and eight (8) deaths, with over four thousand (4,000) tests conducted. The key objectives of these protocols are to educate, engage and empower people to change their behaviour to ensure the transmission of COVID-19 is adequately controlled. The communities would be educated, engaged and empowered to adjust to the "new normal" utilizing the following protocols:

- Wear masks when you go out in public;
- Keep your distance from others (6ft);
- Stay home if you are ill;
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol based sanitizer;
- Cough into a tissue or into the crook of your elbow;
- Avoid touching your face; and
- Clean then sanitize surfaces (e.g. table tops, door knobs and cell phones).

The Guidelines for Gyms and Fitness Centres were sourced from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for COVID-19, the Wisconsin Department of Health and the California Department of Public Health.

The key source documents were derived from the following links:

- i. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/parks-rec/aquatic-venues.html>
- ii. <https://covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-fitness.pdf>
- iii. <https://wedc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19-Gyms-and-Fitness-Facilities-Guidelines.pdf>

## 2. Objective of these Guidelines

To provide Guidelines to minimize the risk, spread and interrupt the transmission of COVID-19 in Gyms and Fitness Centres.

## 3. Legal and Policy Framework

On January 31<sup>st</sup> 2020, the proclamation of COVID-19 as a dangerous infectious disease under the Public Health Ordinance, Chap. 12 No. 4, triggered the special provisions under the Ordinance and the Quarantine Act Chapter 28:05 that are pertinent to the curtailment and management of infectious diseases such as notification, special inspections and offences (Legal Notices Nos. 34 and 35 and excerpt from the Quarantine Act 7(1) appended). Also, the adherence to the 2004 Occupational Safety and Health Act, Chap. 88:88<sup>1</sup>.

## 4. The Guidelines for Gyms and Fitness Centres

The Guidelines apply to all Gyms and Fitness Centres, and services and activities therein. It is the responsibility of the owners of Gyms and Fitness Centres to communicate these Guidelines to their members via announcements, signs, bulletins, websites and social media. All staff members are to be trained, virtually, or in-person on the use of the following Guidelines:

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<sup>1</sup> [https://rgd.legalaffairs.gov.tt/laws2/alphabetical\\_list/lawspdfs/88.08.pdf](https://rgd.legalaffairs.gov.tt/laws2/alphabetical_list/lawspdfs/88.08.pdf)

### 4.1.1 Facility Management

1. Signage outlining the new regulations (e.g. physical distancing, the use of face masks/shields, hand sanitization, cough etiquette) are to be posted at highly visible locations outside and within the facility;

2. Establish a housekeeping schedule to incorporate routine cleaning and sanitisation with regular, frequent, and periodic cleaning of equipment, seating areas (tables, stools, chairs and counters tops); all surface areas, restrooms and shared items;

**Emphasize high-frequency, cleaning (2/2)**



3. Ensure cleaning and sanitisation before opening and at the close of business. Surfaces should be cleaned frequently throughout opening hours;
4. Ensure that high-touch surfaces such as door knobs, tables, stools, chairs, benches, countertops, restrooms and equipment are properly disinfected on a frequent or periodic basis, using a bleach solution of 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) per gallon of water (US 3.8L) or 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water or 70% alcohol solutions or other EPA-approved disinfectant;

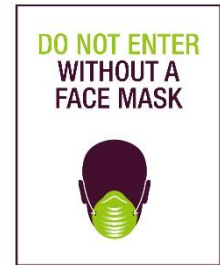


5. Entry and exit points must be equipped with hand sanitization apparatus (60% alcohol based hand sanitizer or sinks with soap and water);
6. Where possible, set-up hand sanitizer dispensers at various locations throughout the facility;
7. Ensure that cleaning or disinfecting product residues are not left on table surfaces, as residues could cause allergic reactions or cause someone to ingest the chemicals;

8. Clean shared objects such as but not limited to treadmills, weights, bikes, benches, leg press, curls & extensions, ropes and machines and other related items in use including tables, counter tops and chairs;
  9. Ensure safe and correct use and storage of disinfectants to avoid food contamination and harm to employees and other individuals;
  10. Allow 15 minute intervals between personal training sessions or group classes to allow for thorough sanitization of all equipment utilized;
  11. Ensure proper ventilation throughout the facility. Where possible, the use of air-conditioning should be minimised and outdoor air should be introduced by opening windows and doors;
  12. Saunas and steam baths should be limited to one (1) member at a time with supporting cleaning and sanitisation before and after use;
  13. Ensure disposable disinfectant wipes and/or suitable disinfectant and disposable cloth-like material for wiping surfaces are available at all locations;
  14. Garbage cans should be strategically placed at multiple locations throughout the facility to allows clients to dispose of gloves, tissues or disinfecting wipes; and
- Non-essential amenities such as magazines and books should be removed from reception areas to avoid cross-contamination.

## 4.1.2 Personal Hygiene

1. Post visual alerts (e.g., signs, posters) at the entrance and in strategic locations e.g., restrooms; point(s) of sale and cash registers, to provide instructions (in appropriate languages) about hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette. Instructions should include wearing a cloth face covering, face mask or face shield for source control, and how and when to perform hand hygiene;
2. Endorse and encourage proper face mask/shield etiquette when entering and exiting the establishment. Where possible, clients and instructors may use face shields during the exercise and fitness programme. Face shields should provide coverage below the level of the chin and should meet other relevant ISO standards;
3. Clients are encouraged to bring personal disinfectant wipes and other related items to the Gym and Fitness Centres for personal use;
4. Provide an adequate supply of 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer at hand washing facilities or stations (fixed or portable), soap and running water for use **before entry**; paper towels and tissue. It would be ideal to have easy open-close taps or pedal actuated/hands free taps;
5. Endorse and encourage proper cough and sneeze etiquette within the establishment, either with a tissue or using the inside of their elbow;
6. Anyone who is ill or exhibits any of the following symptoms (fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, muscle pain, headache, sore-throat, or recent loss of taste or smell) should not be allowed to enter the establishment;





7. Anyone who is immunocompromised and/or has a vulnerable pulmonary disease should not attend the Gym and Fitness Centres;
8. Anyone with a potential exposure to someone exhibiting any of the above symptoms or a confirmed case of COVID-19 should not enter the establishment until the period of quarantine ends (to be certified by County Medical Officer of Health); and
9. Encourage employees and clients to frequently wash hands while at the establishment. The use of touch-free technology for sinks, bathroom fixtures is encouraged. Elbow taps may also be utilized.



#### 4.1.3 Staff Member or Patron/Client

1. Workers and patrons who are sick or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 should not be allowed entry;
2. All persons are required to wear a face covering, mask or shield when entering the premises and to undergo screening with a contactless thermometer for fever and symptoms consistent with COVID-19;
3. If a person has a temperature  $< 37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  and otherwise, without symptoms consistent with COVID-19, then he/she is allowed to enter;
4. If a person has a temperature  $> 37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  with fever or strongly associated symptoms consistent with COVID-19, then he/she is not allowed into the premises;



5. Notify local health officials or call the health hotline ( 800-WELL or 877-WELL (9355)) if a person diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the facility and communicate with staff and patrons about potential exposure while maintaining confidentiality as required;
6. Identify a separate area to quarantine anyone who exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 during hours of operation;
7. Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who becomes sick at the establishment to their home or a healthcare facility;
8. Advise those with exposure to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to call the health hotline ( 800-WELL or 877-WELL (9355)) or seek medical attention at the nearest healthcare provider if severely ill;
9. Close off areas used by the sick person and do not use the area until after cleaning and disinfection (as advised by County Medical Officer of Health);
10. Advise staff and patrons with symptoms of COVID-19 or those who have tested positive for COVID-19 not to return to the establishment until his/her symptoms cease, as confirmed by a Medical Practitioner with supporting documentation;
11. Safely and respectfully conduct daily health checks of staff (e.g., temperature screening (in a shaded or indoor area) and/or or symptom checking) in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations; and
12. Encourage employees who are sick or who have had recent contact with a person with COVID-19 to stay at home. Develop policies that encourage this to remove employees fear of reprisal.

#### 4.1.4 Gym and Fitness Centre Operations

1. Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors and signage, to ensure that individuals remain at least 6 feet apart while using exercise equipment such as treadmills, weights, bikes, benches, leg press, curls & extensions, ropes and other related machines;
2. Modify the layout of the establishment to ensure the equipment remains 6 feet apart with greater distancing for treadmills and other high-exertion aerobic fitness equipment. Where possible, install physical barriers to segregate exercise areas or create physical distancing . Mark off equipment that is not for use;
3. The Instructor and client should maintain a physical distance at least 6 feet apart for individual sessions and 10-12 feet apart for group session sessions ;
4. Rotate and stagger shifts to limit the number of employees in the establishment at any one time;
5. Institute the use of a scheduling system for clients in order to manage the number of persons within the facility at any given point in time. Each client is allowed only 60 minutes in the Gym and Fitness Centre;
6. Ensure that each client entering the facility is given a briefing on the new measures utilized (e.g. how to clean and sanitize equipment, adherence to the physical distancing practices);
7. Clients must bring their own towels and exercise mats to the facility. There should be no sharing of gym towels, mats or other related items at this time;
8. No circuit training, where multiple pieces of equipment are used in quick rotation, to be permitted at this time;



9. Group session exercises, such as aerobics, should be conducted in open air setting. If this is not possible, then there should be sufficient physical distancing, of 10-12 feet apart, with the use of face shields by instructors and clients . With aerobics and spin rooms, only 10 clients are allowed within a square footage of 1,000;
10. Where accessories (e.g. resistance bands, foam rollers) are provided by the facility, implement a check-out system to ensure that each item is returned to staff for sanitization after every use;
11. Clients must disinfect any equipment utilised, immediately after use, with disinfecting wipes and/or suitable disinfectant and disposable cloth-like material for wiping surfaces as provided by the facility. If clients are unable to disinfect equipment after use, the equipment should be immediately attended to by a staff member for sanitization before another client is allowed to utilize the equipment;
12. Clients are encouraged to bring personnel disinfectant wipes and other related items to the Gym and Fitness Centres for use;
13. Client contact data must be collected for every client (time of entry and exit, class attended or trainer utilized) to ensure that proper contact tracing can be conducted if the need arises; and
14. Juice bars and other food services should adhere to the Food Safety and Restaurant and Bars Guidelines.

#### 4.1.5 Responsibility of Owner

1. Promote healthy hygiene practices at the establishment at all times including the wearing of masks and/or face shields by instructors;
2. Intensify cleaning, sanitation and disinfection and ventilation of the establishment;
3. Encourage physical distancing and enhance spacing at the establishment;
4. Train all employees on health and safety protocols;
5. Develop and maintain procedures to check for signs and symptoms of illnesses of all employees;
6. Develop and implement a Plan for ill employees or patrons and communicate this plan to members of staff;
7. Prepare a contact listing of the relevant authorities that need to be informed of any ill persons;
8. Provide proper signage for clients (e.g. sanitizer location, mask/ shield wearing signs, food pick up/ordering locations);
9. Institute the use of a scheduling system for clients in order to manage the number of persons within the facility at any given point in time;
10. Develop a register of all clients who utilise the Gym and Fitness Centre including name, address, telephone contact and email address; and
11. Ensure and maintain daily signing and signing out on the register.

#### 4.1.6 Responsibility of Client/User

1. Clients who are ill or exhibit/report any of the following symptoms (fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, muscle pain, headache, sore-throat, or recent loss of taste or smell) should not be allowed to enter the establishment;
2. Strictly adhere to these Guidelines prior to use and duration of use and exit of the Gym and Fitness Centre, including screening for temperature, physical distancing of 6 feet apart and sanitizing of equipment and related items before and after use;
3. Clients are encouraged to bring and use personal disinfectant wipes, face shields and other related items to the Gym and Fitness Centres before and after use of equipment/s and other related materials;
4. Clients must bring their own towels and exercise mats to the facility. There should be no sharing of gym towels, mats or other related items at this time; and
5. Ensure daily signing and signing out of the register including name, address, telephone contact and email address.

## 5. Implementation of the Guidelines

The Office of the Chief Medical Officer will officially communicate the Guidelines to all owners/managers of Gyms and Fitness Centres to ensure effective implementation and compliance. Thereafter, continuous assessment and reporting on the adherence of these Guidelines should be implemented to ensure strict compliance.

## 6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The County Medical Officers of Health and the Public Health Inspectors will provide continuous assessment and reporting to the Chief Medical Officer on the implementation of these Guidelines through continuous site visits and inspection of the establishment to ensure the strict adherence to the Guidelines in order to reduce the threat and mitigate the risk of spread of COVID-19.

## 7. References

- i. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, June 9th, 2020, Considerations for Public Pools, Hot Tubs, and Water Playgrounds During COVID-19  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/parks-rec/aquatic-venues.html>
- ii. California Department of Public Health, June 9th, 2020, COVID-19 INDUSTRY GUIDANCE: Fitness Facilities  
<https://covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-fitness.pdf>
- iii. Tennessee Pledge, June 9<sup>th</sup> 2020, Exercise Facilities  
[https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/governoroffice-documents/covid-19-assets/Pledge\\_Exercise.pdf](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/governoroffice-documents/covid-19-assets/Pledge_Exercise.pdf)
- iv. Wisconsin Guidance on Gyms and Fitness Facilities  
<https://wedc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19-Gyms-and-Fitness-Facilities-Guidelines.pdf>

## 8. Appendices

### 8.1.1 Legal Notice No. 34 (Corrigendum)

*Legal Supplement Part B—Vol. 59, No. 53—22nd April, 2020*

435

LEGAL NOTICE No. 79

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

THE PUBLIC HEALTH ORDINANCE, CH. 12 No. 4

CORRIGENDUM

*(In respect of Legal Notice No. 34 of 2020)*

PROCLAMATION DECLARING THE 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS  
(2019-nCoV) TO BE A DANGEROUS INFECTIOUS DISEASE

IN Legal Notice No. 34 of 2020 published on 31st January, 2020, delete  
the word “100” and substitute the word “103”.

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## 8.1.2 Legal Notice No. 34

*Legal Supplement Part B—Vol. 59, No. 11—31st January, 2020*

63

LEGAL NOTICE NO. 34

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

No. 17 of 2020.

By Her Excellency **PAULA-MAE WEEKES**, O.R.T.T.,  
President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago  
and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

[L.S.]

**PAULA-MAE WEEKES**  
*President*

### A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS it is provided by section 100 of the Public Health Ordinance, Ch. 12 No. 4, that the Governor may, by proclamation, declare any disease to be an infectious disease or a dangerous infectious disease:

And whereas it is provided by section 3(1) of the Existing Laws (Amendment) Order, No. 8 of 1962, that any reference in any existing law to the Governor shall be read and construed as a reference to the Governor-General:

And whereas it is also provided by section 5(5)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Act, Chap. 1:01, that any reference to the Governor-General shall be read and construed as if it were a reference to the President:

And whereas Trinidad and Tobago has been advised recently by the World Health Organization of the existence of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV), a highly infectious and dangerous disease which is currently occurring in various locations around the world:

And whereas the Minister of Health believes that due to the speed and ease of international travel, Trinidad and Tobago can ultimately expect the arrival of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) and the devastating effect on its public health:

Now, therefore, I, **PAULA-MAE WEEKES**, President as aforesaid, do hereby declare the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) to be a dangerous infectious disease.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of  
the President of the Republic of  
Trinidad and Tobago, at the Office of  
the President, St. Ann's, this 31st day of  
January, 2020.

### 8.1.3 Legal Notice No. 35

*Legal Supplement Part B—Vol. 59, No. 11—31st January, 2020*

65

LEGAL NOTICE No. 35

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

QUARANTINE ACT, CHAP. 28:05

ORDER

MADE BY THE CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER UNDER SECTION 6(1) OF THE  
QUARANTINE ACT

THE QUARANTINE [2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (2019-nCoV)  
DISEASE] ORDER, 2020

1. This Order may be cited as the Quarantine [2019 Novel Citation  
Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Disease] Order, 2020.
2. In this Order, “Health Officer” has the same meaning assigned Interpretation  
to it in regulation 2 of the Quarantine (Maritime) Regulations. No. 19 of 1944
3. For the purpose of the prevention of the spread of the 2019 Novel Special  
Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Disease (“NCV”), the Health Officer may take measure  
the following special measures:
  - (a) where an infection, which may be NCV, has occurred on  
board a ship during a period of six weeks immediately  
preceding its arrival at a port of Trinidad and Tobago, the  
surveillance of the crew and passengers who have been  
exposed to the infection, for a period of fourteen days from  
the last day of possible exposure to the infection; or
  - (b) where an infection, which may be NCV, has occurred on  
board an aircraft at any time immediately preceding its  
arrival at an aerodrome in Trinidad and Tobago, the  
surveillance of the crew and passengers who have been  
exposed to the infection, for a period of fourteen days from  
the last day of possible exposure to the infection.

Dated this 31st day of January, 2020.

R. PARASRAM  
*Chief Medical Officer*

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## 8.1.4 Quarantine Act Chap. 28:05 7 (1) to (3)

Minister. In approving any rules, the Minister may make any amendments thereto which he thinks desirable.

6. (1) When in the opinion of the Quarantine Authority an emergency exists, the Quarantine Authority may by Order direct special measures to be taken during the continuance of that emergency for any of the purposes specified in sections 4 and 5, and any such Order shall have effect notwithstanding anything to the contrary in any regulations or rules in force by virtue of those sections.

Power to make  
Orders in  
emergency.

(2) An Order made under subsection (1) may be varied or rescinded by Order of the Minister.

7. (1) Any person who—

- (a) refuses to answer or knowingly gives an untrue answer to any inquiry made under the authority of this Act, or intentionally withholds any information reasonably required of him by an officer or other person acting under the authority of this Act, or knowingly furnishes to any such officer or other person any information which is false;
- (b) refuses or wilfully omits to do any act which he is required to do by this Act, or refuses or wilfully omits to carry out any lawful order, instruction or condition made, given or imposed by any officer or other person acting under the authority of this Act; or
- (c) assaults, resists, wilfully obstructs or intimidates any officer or other person acting under the authority of this Act, or offers or gives a bribe to any officer or person in connection with his powers or duties under this Act, or being such officer or person, demands, solicits or takes a bribe in connection with his powers or duties under this Act, or otherwise obstructs the execution of this Act,

Offences and  
penalties.

is liable on conviction to a fine of six thousand dollars and to imprisonment for six months.

(2) Any person who is guilty of any other offence against this Act is liable on conviction to a fine of six thousand dollars and to imprisonment for six months.

Ch. 4:20. (3) All offences against this Act may be prosecuted summarily under the Summary Courts Act.

Rewards to informers. **8.** The Minister may direct that any part of any fine recovered in respect of any offence against this Act shall be paid to any person who has given information leading to the conviction of the offender.

Recovery of expenses and charges. **9.** (1) All expenses and charges payable to the Quarantine Authority under this Act may be sued for and recovered by him before any Court of competent jurisdiction, and a certificate purporting to be under the hand of the Quarantine Authority to the effect that the expenses or charges sued for are due and payable shall be received in evidence and shall be sufficient evidence of the facts therein stated unless the contrary be shown.

(2) Any sum received or recovered by the Quarantine Authority in payment of expenses or charges payable to him under this Act shall be paid into public funds.

Duty and power of the Police. **10.** (1) Every member of the Police Service shall enforce (using force if necessary) compliance with this Act and with any order, instruction or condition lawfully made, given or imposed by any officer or other person under the authority of this Act; and for such purpose any member of the Police Service may board any ship or aircraft and may enter any premises without a warrant.

(2) Any member of the Police Service may arrest without a warrant any person whom he has reasonable cause to believe to have committed any offence against this Act.

(3) In this section the expression "member of the Police Service" includes a member of any police organisation constituted by law who has the general powers of a member of the Police Service.