



COVID-19 Pool Safety FAQs

Revised November 23, 2020, 2020

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) is committed to ensuring the safe operation of swimming pools during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) public health emergency.

Per Governor Hogan's [Executive Order 20-11-17-01](#) and [MDH Amended Directive and Order Regarding Swimming Pools 2020-06-10-03](#), outdoor swimming pools are allowed to open subject to all Executive Orders in effect and all other requirements or limitations set by the local jurisdiction.

Please find below a list of frequently asked questions and answers to those questions. Businesses should also see the FAQs available on the Business Express website, <https://businessexpress.maryland.gov/coronavirus>, and the Back to Business website, <https://open.maryland.gov/backtobusiness/>, for more information.

Additionally, if you have a specific question about swimming pools that is not answered below, or you cannot find the answer on any of the following resources, please visit [MD Youth Camp and Swimming Pool Questions](#).

Which pools are allowed to open?

In all cases, local jurisdictions have the discretion to implement more stringent standards, including delaying the opening of any of the following facilities.

All outdoor and indoor pools and aquatic centers may open, subject to [MDH Amended Directive and Order Regarding Swimming Pools 2020-06-10-03](#).

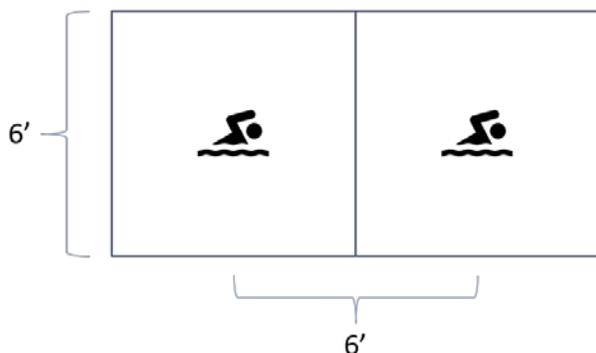
The Amended Order no longer has restrictions specific to wading (kiddie) pools, spas, hot tubs, spray or splash pads, and lazy river pools. Subject to local restrictions, facilities may open these amenities.

Pools used for therapeutic purposes, including physical therapy pools, may remain open as prescribed by a healthcare provider.

What are the capacity limits for in the pool water?

Per the [MDH Amended Directive and Order](#), pools may have no more than one person in the water for every 36 square feet of pool surface area.

One person per 36 square feet (6' x 6') allows for proper social distancing in the water.



What are the capacity limits for the grounds and decks surrounding the pool?

All pools must ensure that social distancing requirements are followed on the grounds and decks. Indoor pools may operate at no more than 50% of their maximum capacity, as defined in [Executive Order 20-11-17-01](#), although the operating occupancy may be lower to maintain physical distancing at all times.

Can pool restrooms and shower facilities be used?

Yes, pool bathers may use indoor restrooms and shower facilities. The pool facility should implement procedures (including floor markings and signage) to ensure that people do not congregate around the restrooms or shower facilities. Pool operators must disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least twice a day. They must also clean the floors, toilets, and sinks with soap and water daily. They must clean the pool tile and walls at least once a week. For more information, see the [Guidance and Best Practices for Outdoor Pools](#).

Who is responsible for enforcing the COVID-19 prevention requirements at pools?

The licensed pool owner is responsible for complying with all State and local operating requirements and compliance with applicable Executive and Secretary Orders.

Are drinking fountains allowed at pool facilities?

Drinking fountains are required and will need to be cleaned in accordance with [CDC](#) and MDH guidelines. Encourage patrons to bring their own water.

How can lifeguards be trained in water rescue skills while maintaining physical distancing?

The order is not intended to preclude lifeguard training. This training typically includes the practice and demonstration of rescue skills in the water with another person closer than 6 feet and without wearing face coverings. The Red Cross does not have an alternative to the practice and demonstration of rescue skills in the water with another person, at least at this time.

Are there specific guidelines about teaching swimming lessons or running swim teams?

Youth sports gatherings and events may resume indoor and outdoor sporting and other customary operations. Individuals should still maintain six feet social distancing whenever possible.

Swimming lessons may be conducted if the instructor and student can safely stay at least 6 feet apart. If the student is advanced, the instructor may be able to teach from the deck and maintain physical distancing. For younger or less advanced students, the instructor may have a parent in the pool with their child to help with teaching.

Can lap swimming take place?

Lap swimming is permitted for up to four people in the water in each lane at any one time. Swimmers must maintain at least 6 feet of distance whenever possible and should not congregate in the water.

Are face coverings required at pools?

Face coverings should not be worn while swimming. Persons aged 5 and older are required under [Executive Order 20-11-17-01](#) to wear face coverings when indoors at pool facilities and aquatic centers, and outdoors when unable to consistently maintain at least six feet of distance from other non-household individuals. Please see section IV.b of the Executive Order for additional requirements.

Exceptions to this requirement are detailed in section IV.c of the Executive Order and include:

- **While swimming or engaging in other physical activities where the use of a face covering is likely to pose a safety risk**
- If unsafe to do so due to a disabilities or medical condition, including breathing conditions such as asthma and developmental disabilities

INTERIM COVID-19 Pool Safety FAQs

- If wearing a face covering would subject an employee to an unsafe working condition
- If wearing a face covering would impede communication by or with persons with a hearing impairment
- While consuming food or beverages
- When outdoors and able to consistently maintain six feet of distance from other individuals

IMPORTANT: Caution should be used in advising the use of facial coverings for children aged 5 and over during hot days or when children are engaged in vigorous activity. In these settings, facial coverings can increase the risks of heat exhaustion or hyperthermia (heat-related injuries) and may also not be advisable for children with asthma or other respiratory conditions. In general, facial coverings will be most important when children must be 6 feet or closer from each other for a prolonged (more than 15 minutes) period of time.

Resources:

- Maryland Department of Health Amended Directive and Order Regarding Swimming Pools:
 - <https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/Documents/20.20.06.10.03%20-%20MDH%20Order%20-%20Amended%20Pools.pdf>
- Guidance and best practices for outdoor pools:
 - <https://open.maryland.gov/backtobusiness/>
- Guidance from CDC for businesses:
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>
- Guidance from WHO for businesses:
 - <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf>
- Additional information for businesses on planning for and responding to coronavirus disease is available on Maryland's Business Express website:
 - <https://businessexpress.maryland.gov/coronavirus>