

COVID-19 UPDATE – supporting your business



By now you will have seen lots of information on best practices for staying safe both personally and for staff. We encourage you to keep updated on this, as well as sharing this with staff & members.



As a recap:

- Encourage staff and members to stay at home if exhibiting flu like symptoms or if they have come into contact with a known carrier.
- Regularly wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water.



Specifically for gyms and exercise spaces:

- Wipe down ALL surfaces that come into contact with people/hands/bodies with appropriate sprays and do this in a public way & regularly (multiple times a day). Pay extra attention to high touch points such as door handles, gym benches etc.
- Encourage non-contact as much as possible (ie no handshakes, high fives etc). Where contact is required, regular handwashing/sanitiser between clients.
- Provide wipes and hand sanitiser in all public places (especially the entry and in exercise spaces)
- Keep members and staff updated about your practices, and what you require them to do also.

A reminder: COVID-19 is not transmissible through the air, nor through sweat.

- Only share reputable news sources such as MOH and WHO.



The future & what this means for exercise providers in New Zealand

The future path of COVID-19, and what this means for our industry is unknown. It's possible COVID-19 has reached its peak and/or it never takes hold in New Zealand, in which case it may be that 'business as usual' returns quickly. However it's also possible that within 2-3 weeks we could have a large scale outbreak in New Zealand (aka Italy), and we go into government imposed lockdown of some sort. Perhaps most likely is something in between the two where there are some more cases in New Zealand, but not enough to mandate compulsory closure of public spaces (such as schools, malls and gyms) but where the behaviour of individuals is modified enough to effect your business.

Possible scale of effects



Returns to normal quickly	COVID-19 continue to grow no regulations but fear drives people away from exercise spaces	Large outbreak Government controls Exercise spaces closed
---------------------------	---	---

While at either end of this spectrum it will be clear when it happens, it's very possible we remain somewhere in between the two for many months, and as such it's important to know where your organisation is performing and how much it is being effected by the behaviour and fears of your members and staff.

Preparing for what could happen – scenario planning and risk management. Our 4 step plan.

1. Know your numbers

Keep an eye on numbers that will indicate if members/clients are changing their behaviour including:

- Facility usage (visits per day/week)
- Activity stats: average number in classes
- Specific programme bookings/payments eg PT bookings etc

Cancellations and suspensions – it's especially important during this time to find the reasons for any suspension or cancellation to know if its COVID-19 driving this, or some other factor .

Note: It's likely that usage stats will begin show trends before cancellations, but depending on the speed of any outbreak it may not be much of a lag between the two.

Talk to your staff – how are they feeling about COVID-19 themselves and also what clients/members are saying to them. Remember there is no 'correct' response here, everyone will react differently and have different opinions on this.



2. Be proactive with cleaning and be very public about it

This includes sourcing appropriate cleaning chemicals and using this on all surfaces that come into contact with people.

Cleaning should be multiple times a day on all high traffic items (door handles etc) and at least once a day on all surfaces that come into contact with people, and multiple times per day for higher traffic facilities.

Provide wipes and hand gels in entry locations and exercise spaces.

Communicate with members via email and social media about steps you are taking to keep them safe.

Use the opportunity to remind members about the benefits of being physically active, and other things they can do to keep a strong immunise system (eg sleep, managing stress etc)



3. Be prepared for a member/client contracting COVID-19.

Have a communications plans to members about this (prepare this now) as well as having practices in place now that address it (see item 2 above). Be prepared to provide advice on how your facility is safe to use, and why and be able to back it up with evidence.

If this does occur, and are contacted by the media, feel free to contact ExerciseNZ for direct support for media management.





4. Plan for large outbreak / large financial downturn.

a. **Explore other ways of delivering exercise such as online** (pre-recorded or live video). Are there any existing digital products you could subscribe to and share with members if needed?

Things to consider:

- i. Are any of your services digitizable or staff able to act as delivery on your behalf (in some digital way).
- ii. Consider group activities, 1 on 1 sessions, personalised products vs just 'advice for home workouts'.
- iii. Is there a fee for your digital/online services – free for members or reduced fee if the facility is closed but this is offered?
- iv. Consider Personal Trainers and other providers of services within your facility. Involve them in the planning process, as they may wish to offer digital services too.

b. **Develop a clear and consistent policy on suspensions/cancellations** during this period. Train staff in encouraging suspension/freezing over cancellation. Is there a fee normally and is this waived for COVID-19 cases?

c. **Use the time to explore cost savings** both immediate and based on need (ie staff cuts etc). Are there options for staff to go on leave (even have leave in advance if needed) or be on a % of pay to both support them while being financially viable for the facility? Plan for various scenarios from 10% downturn to full closure for a time – what does this mean for your business and staff? Be upfront with staff about your plans in advance and as much as possible involve them in this planning.

d. **Consider support for PTs** – as with all downturns of this type, it's often PTs that get hit first (and harder). We are aware this is happening already and is highly variable between PTs.



What we are doing to support you?

We are actively engaged with multiple organisations globally who are working on this issue including the International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA), Fitness Australia and Active UK.

We are contacting the government in New Zealand to explore support packages, including personal trainers who may be already adversely affected.

The whole area of COVID-19 is rapidly developing, so we will be providing regular member updates as well as sharing info via our social media channels.

For more information or questions, feel free to contact us anytime.