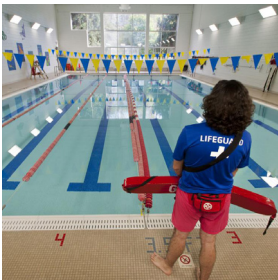


Take the Plunge: A Guide to Re-Open Your Pool

These much-needed guidelines are provided by Sara Kooperman, CEO of WATERinMOTION®

The exciting news is that according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), pool chemicals have six times the strength needed to kill the coronavirus. So why aren't our aquatic exercise programs the first group fitness options to reopen? And since they are not opened yet, how can we do this safely, creatively, and successfully? Aqua Directors, Club Managers and Group Fitness Leaders need guidelines regarding standards and systems to allow participants to take the plunge again. In this article, we will outline a few simple recommendations and requirements that will ensure a seamless and profitable relaunch of your aquatic program.



CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL (CDC)

The Centers for Disease Control has stated that there is no evidence that the virus that causes Covid-19 can be spread to individuals through the water in pools, hot tubs or spas. The CDC further shared that the proper operation and maintenance, including treatment with chlorine and bromine, of these facilities should inactivate the virus in the water. While hot tubs or spas should most likely stay closed because it is so difficult to social distance in such a small space, this makes our pools possibly the safest area for exercise!

ACTIVE AGERS & SOCIAL ISOLATION

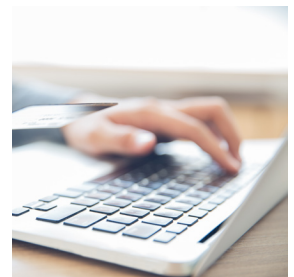
Because of forced social isolation, our active agers, sadly, have become more sedentary than ever. Our older adults get out of shape more quickly and have been more inactive than ever during this pandemic, which makes re-entering fitness centers more challenging. The cushioning effects of hydrostatic pressure and buoyancy in the aquatic environment found in our pools and in our aqua exercise programs creates a comfortable and safe setting to re-start an exercise program.

SET GUIDELINES

The first item that our clubs should address when reopening their facilities is to set and publish guidelines. These requirements can be provided to our students via websites, social media, and onsite signage. It is further recommended that Instructors practice welcoming and managing participants prior to the opening of the facility. A dress rehearsal for reopening should be required. A conference call (possibly Zoom) plus a live run-through will best prepare all staff.

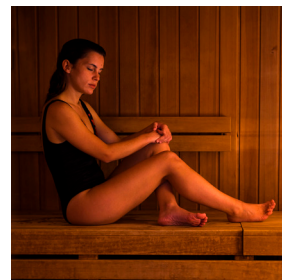
RESERVATION SYSTEM

To protect against overcrowding, a reservation system is recommended for all aspects of the club. This is an organized way to control the number of participants in the weight room, the group exercise room and the pool. Reservations must also be used for lap-lane swimming requiring one person to a lane at a time. For group exercise, the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends 40 to 60 square feet per person. This applies to land exercise, but also can be used as a guideline for the pool. Simply measure the shallow end of the pool, length by width, multiply the numbers and divide by 40, 50 or 60, which will provide you with the number of individuals who can participate in a vertical aquatic exercise program.



HOT TUBS, STEAM ROOMS & SAUNAS

A reservation system should also be used for a hot tub, steam room or sauna. There should only be one person in a steam room or sauna at a time. Our hot tub usage must also be limited by space requirements ensuring social distancing. Since hot tubs are typically small, we most likely should limit them to one or two individuals at a time. If friends or families are social distancing together, they, of course; can enjoy these facilities together. Keep in mind that it might be too difficult to clean between each participant, therefore; the club may choose to keep these facilities closed.



ENTERING THE GYM

All the typical precautions must be adhered to when individuals enter the facility. Staff and Members must have their temperature taken and answer questions regarding COVID-19 exposure and other general health inquiries. Every member or guest entering the club must comply with all CDC and governmental requirements.



MASKS FOR MEMBERS

All members arriving to the club must wear masks. They should not take off their masks until they are all the way into the aquatic environment. It is encouraged that participants remove their masks once they are about to get in the water. They must avoid getting the mask wet because once the mask gets soaked with water, it may stop the ability of the person to inhale air. Also, even if you can keep the mask dry, oxygen consumption is much easier without a mask. It is, in fact, safer for students to exercise without a mask.

PLASTIC SHIELD MASKS FOR INSTRUCTORS

Instructors should wear plastic shield masks when teaching aquatic exercise. These plastic shields are inexpensive (\$4-\$5 each) and allow the student to see the face and hear the voice of the instructor. The risk of spitting when yelling (and cuing) is contained by the plastic shield. The shield will not fog up and it provides adequate space for the teacher to breathe.

MICROPHONES & WINDSCREENS

Most pools do not have microphones for their Instructors to use, but if they do have a microphone, each Instructor must own and use their own windscreen. A windscreen is that little foam ball on the end of the microphone closest to the Instructor's mouth. It prevents spitting on the microphone itself and preserves the life of the microphone. The microphone and windscreen should also fit comfortably underneath the plastic shield mask. Each club should provide every Instructor with their own personal windscreen and require the Instructor to use it each time they teach. The club should also keep a few new ones on hand for forgetful Instructors to use and keep.

TRAVELING TO & FROM THE POOL

Traveling to and from the pool seems to be one of the most difficult adventures of our exercise program. With locker rooms being closed, entering, and exiting, while maintaining 6-foot social distancing, is a challenge. Even if the locker room is closed, we may still want to use it as a walkway and entrance to the pool. The locker room can either be used as a changing area with social distancing requirements or simply as a path to the pool.



CLOTHING & CHANGING

Students should arrive early already dressed for their aqua workout. When they arrive at the club, they should be wearing their masks, suits, cover-up, and outdoor shoes. Sandals or flip flops are preferred as they can quickly and easily be removed. If the locker room is closed entirely, a bench or chairs near the pool should be available for participants to change from outdoor shoes to pool shoes. Distancing stickers on the benches or separated chairs can be placed to ensure a six-foot separation between pool participants.



SHOES & TOWELS

Each student must bring their own towel and aquatic exercise shoes. They should carry these items in their own personal bag. The removal of their outdoor shoes should happen in the locker room or outside the pool deck if possible. This prevents outside dirt and materials from entering the aquatic environment.



LOCKER ROOMS

Many clubs are not opening their locker rooms at all, but if they are open for use, lockers open for use must be 6-feet apart. Typically, every third locker will be available for use. Lockers can be closed off by using yellow police tape or stickers. Make sure that stickers are checked prior to placing them on lockers to prevent permanent disfigurement of the surface space. All outdoor clothing and shoes should be stored in their personal bag and then placed inside the locker.

This will limit the constant cleaning requirements of the locker. Cover-ups and shoes can also be placed inside their personal bag and stored on the benches or chairs by the edge of the aquatic area.

LABELING & REMOVING MASKS

As mentioned above, prior to entering the pool and before the risk of getting it wet, the mask should be removed. This may happen in the locker room or by the side of the pool on the benches or chairs. The masks must be placed in the individual's bag. It is recommended that each participant label their mask on the outside or inside using an indelible ink pen, so the ink does not transfer to their face. Labeling the mask will ensure that nobody accidentally picks up another person's mask.

ENTERING THE POOL & SOCIAL DISTANCING

When entering the pool, participants must remain 6-feet apart. It is during this time that social distancing must be adhered to strictly because our participants are not wearing their masks. Place stickers on the pool deck 6 feet apart, similar to the type of large, ground stickers you find at the grocery store or pharmacy when people are waiting in line. This will provide a simple guide for the students to follow and create forced separations. Make sure that you check your stickers before sticking them to your pool deck, so that the adhesive on the bottom of the stickers can be easily removed and does not permanently mar the pool deck tile.



POOL MARKERS & SETTING STUDENT POSITIONS

We must make sure that all students remain six feet apart while exercising in the pool. Unfortunately, we cannot place stickers on the bottom of the pool to guide students to their spots. Instead, stickers can be placed on the wall directly in front of the pool at 18 inches above the ground and six feet apart.

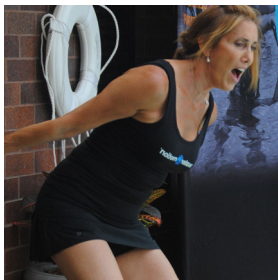
18 inches high will be eye-level for the participants in the pool since individuals are standing up in the sunken pool. We must place these stickers both on the front wall and on the side wall.



If stickers are unavailable, or our clubs do not permit us to adhere items to the wall, we may place towels or orange cones six feet apart on the deck right near the pool's edge. Towels or cones can be used to set both a vertical (frontal) line and a horizontal (side) line. These can also serve as an appropriate marker.

EXERCISE AREA

When getting into the pool, the stairs should be used. The Instructor must require each student enter slowly and individually waiting until the previous student is in the pool and safely located in their exercise area. Each student must move quickly to their spot furthest away from the stairs but remain six feet from anyone else in the pool. Different students of different heights must find the best spot, so that the pool water is at chest-level. Only once the student is in their position can another student enter the pool safely. This is similar to entering a pool after someone has used a slide or diving board. Individuals must wait until the person before them has safely cleared the area.



CONFIDENT INSTRUCTORS & PATIENT STUDENTS

Entering the pool sounds complicated and scary, but it is simple and easy. People are now used to social distancing, comfortable with a slower pace, and eager to begin an exercise regime. After the first time through this process, they become accustomed quickly and will easily assume a calm and patient demeanor. It is up to the Instructor to keep a confident presence and a smile on their face. Remember, this too shall pass!

CHOREOGRAPHY CHOICES

When developing or adapting workout programs and choreography, it is best to perform "Routines for Sardines." These are choreography choices and movement patterns that encourage the participant to workout in one place without moving in a forward or backward direction. This will support the 6-foot social distancing requirements. All the typical aquatic exercises can be performed (i.e. jumping jacks, knee lifts, kicks, etc.).

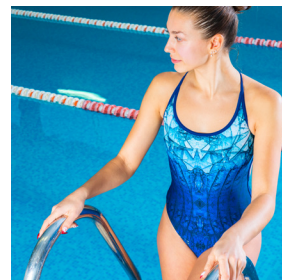
AVOID HIIT TRAINING

Additionally, Instructors want to avoid having their students reach an anaerobic threshold (in simple terms, getting too out-of-breath). High intensity workouts at 80% or higher of the predicted maximum heart rate increases cortisol production releasing free radicals in the body and leads to possible compromises to the immune system. In a normal situation, the break down that occurs during programs such as HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training) is an excellent way to challenge and rebuild the body to become even stronger. However, in our current pandemic, this may not be advisable since extreme HIIT programming, without adequate recovery time, should be avoided because this may decrease the body's ability to fight diseases. HIIT programming may reduce the body's immune system response. During aquatic exercise, it is very difficult to reach an anaerobic threshold, so again; the aquatic environment is a safe exercise alternative. As a rule, moderate exercise alternatives should be utilized on both land and in the water.



WATER TEMPERATURE

Pools tend to have water temperatures of 78-84 degrees. It is recommended that our aqua exercise pools remain a bit cooler to make them a bit less vulnerable to contaminants. If, however, our pool participants enjoy the more comfortable 84-degree pool, be sure to measure and maintain appropriate levels of chlorine and bromine.



AIR TEMPERATURE & AIR CIRCULATION

It may be best to have a window or door (or both) open during your aquatic exercise class. This will encourage air circulation. Further, the air temperature can be reduced slightly in the pool area to decrease stagnant air, which makes it easier to breathe. This might make our students feel a bit chillier, so warmer water that is appropriately chlorinated (treated with chemicals) is encouraged.



AQUA EQUIPMENT

If the Instructor wishes to use aqua equipment such as noodles or aqua dumbbells during the class, the equipment can be pre-placed on the edge of the pool in 6-foot intervals. Then, each person may pick up their equipment independently while maintaining social distancing. Immediately after each student grabs their piece(s) of equipment, the student must dunk it under the water to ensure disinfecting and then the equipment can be used. Another way to pass out equipment would be to supply the equipment in a bin right before the student enters the pool, and each participant can take a piece of equipment. Once in the water, they must dunk the equipment in the water, thereby disinfecting it, making it ready for use. To return the equipment, a reverse drop-off procedure can be used. Either the students can place their equipment on the pool edge or return it to the bin from where it came. Remember, chlorine and bromine act as a disinfectant according to the CDC.

EXITING THE POOL

When it comes to exiting the pool area, it is recommended that another door be used, which is different from the one used to enter. This will help prevent congestion should another class be starting soon. It is recommended that sufficient time between classes is allowed for one group to end, leave the locker room or pool area, and depart before another class enters. If available, a separate exit should be used since there is always a safety exit for each pool. Often, this door leads directly to a parking lot. If it is an emergency exit or fire door, the alarm may be turned off only during the departure of the students.

HAVE FUN

Lastly, and most importantly, it is up to the Instructor to create a comfortable environment for the student. Guiding students into the pool, to their exercise spot, and through their workout in a confident manner is the key. The class should be uplifting and fun with enjoyable music choices and simple, but challenging, choreography alternatives. The club, the entire Staff and the Instructor must work as a team to ensure and a safe, effective, and enjoyable workout experience.

In summary, please find a checklist below to help guide you through the reopening of your pool during this pandemic:

1. Set Guidelines
2. Reservation System
3. Hot Tubs, Steam Rooms & Saunas
4. Entering the Gym
5. Masks for Members
6. Plastic Shield Masks for Instructors
7. Microphones & Windscreens
8. Traveling to & from the Pool
9. Clothing & Changing
10. Shoes & Towels
11. Locker Rooms
12. Labeling & Removing Masks
13. Entering the Pool & Social Distancing
14. Pool Markers & Setting Student Positions
15. Exercise Area
16. Confident Instructors & Patient Students
17. Choreography Choices
18. Avoid HIIT Training
19. Water Temperature
20. Air Temperature & Air Circulation
21. Aqua Equipment
22. Exiting the Pool
23. Have Fun

Whether your facility has re-opened or has plans to re-open, these guidelines and tips are a smart way to keep your members healthy, safe, and loyal to you and your club.



About the Author, Sara Kooperman, JD

Sara, CEO of SCW Fitness Education and WATERinMOTION®, is a visionary leader that has transformed the fitness education community. A successful business owner and advisor, she is a keynote speaker, published author, podcast presenter and sought-after industry trail-blazer. Sara has a unique ability to share her passion and devotion towards fitness education through her humor, enthusiasm and her effervescent no-nonsense personality. She serves on the Gold's Gym Think Tank, is on the Women

in Fitness Association Board of Directors and is a proud inductee into the National Fitness Hall of Fame. Sara has left an indelible mark on the fitness industry as a whole. www.WATERinMOTION.com, www.SCWfit.com, www.LiveStreamMA-NIA.com



About WATERinMOTION®

WATERinMOTION® is a pre-choreographed, quarterly-released group aqua exercise program that refreshes the moves, music and member experience every three (3) months through a new choreography video, downloadable 55 minutes of music, complete choreo booklet, flash cards and one (1) page choreo quick guide with stellar banners, posters and marketing kits. WATERinMOTION® includes three (3) FREE Certifications (online & live) featuring leaders with over 100 years of combined teaching experience guaranteeing a safe, structured and creative class EVERY class!