

**Q: "I live in a community association that has a fitness center that I would like to start using again. Can our board reopen the center and, if so, are there things they should be considering?"**

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*Authored by [Adam Kahn](#)*

A: To protect the health and safety of its residents, many community associations temporarily closed their fitness centers. It is understandable that many residents now want their fitness centers to re-opened; however, it is up to each association's board to decide whether it is safe (and feasible) to do so. As a point of reference, the City of Chicago recently offered some recommended (but not mandatory) guidelines for residential buildings in "Phase III" ([link here](#)), including that fitness centers should be remain closed "unless for one-on-one personal training."

Ultimately, each community association's board will need to determine whether to re-open fitness centers and, if so, what protocols are needed to protect the health and safety of its residents.

What follows are some considerations for community boards to consider when deciding whether (and how) to re-open a fitness center:

1. **Cleaning** : What are the proper cleaning and disinfectant protocols for the fitness center? Examples: frequent sanitizing (several times per day), reduced hours to allow for a thorough cleaning, posting signs reminding residents to wipe down machines before and after each use. Can safety considerations be safely and effectively implemented? Does the staff (if any) have the capacity to do so on top of their current workload? Who will be in charge of implementing additional cleaning protocols? Are necessary cleaning and disinfecting supplies readily available?
2. **Social Distancing:** How many residents are permitted to use the fitness center at a time? How will the maximum capacity be monitored and enforced? Examples: set time limits for use, reserve time slots in advance. Are guests allowed to use the fitness center? (not recommended). Can the fitness center be re-arranged to promote social distancing and safety? Examples: remove/re-arrange equipment, add markers for proper distancing, direct residents to wear masks while in the fitness center. How should this be communicated to residents? Examples: e-blast, newsletter, posted signs, verbal reminders from staff (if any) as needed.

3. **Insurance**: Is there coverage available under the association's insurance policy if a resident contracts coronavirus while at the fitness center and sues the association? Note: We strongly recommend discussing this with the association's insurance carrier in advance so that the board can make an informed decision.
4. **Contingency Plan**: What happens if a fitness center user/resident tests positive for coronavirus? How long should the fitness center remain closed? What additional cleaning procedures should then be implemented before re-opening?
5. **Cost**: How will the association pay for additional safety protocols (additional cleaning supplies, staffing, etc.)?

Unfortunately, there is no "one size fits all" answer for re-opening community association fitness centers. Instead, each board will need to decide on the approach they believe is in the best interest of the association. As in all things pandemic related, health and safety must come first.

