

**Date:** June 12, 2020  
**To:** Alberta Aquatic Facility Operators  
**From:** Safe Healthy Environments, Alberta Health Services  
**RE:** Requirements for reopening swimming pools during a pandemic

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All aquatic facilities were required to close to the public during the COVID-19 Pandemic. While closed, water in many basins, water lines, pool filters and other equipment and throughout the building may have sat stagnant without proper chemical balance. Harmful bacteria may grow in stagnant water, and could pose a health risk to your clients.

*The following procedure must be followed prior to public swimming pools re-opening to the public:*

1. Review and assess the condition and operation of the pool and equipment during the closure.
  - a. If the water in the basin was circulating, has the water chemistry been properly maintained throughout the entire closure?
  - b. If the water in the basin was drained, was it drained properly to reduce stagnant water in the plumbing, filter and pumps?

If the answer to (a) or (b) is No or Unknown, then the pool must proceed with a treatment process as outlined in point 2 through 5. If you answer Yes, proceed to point 7.

*If there any signs of problems during the closure such as algae growth, cloudy water, alarms, odors and/or issues with equipment, additional service may need to be completed before reopening. Facilities should contract the services of a suitable professional where more complex problems arise.*

2. Clean and vacuum the basin prior to super chlorinating so that the chlorine is more effective. Be sure to take the appropriate precautions when using chemicals for cleaning and disinfecting. Consult the product's Safety Data Sheets.
3.
  - a. Increase Free Available Chlorine (FAC) level to 20 ppm (with non-stabilized chlorine), maintain a pH of 7.5 or lower and a water temperature of 20°C, or
  - b. Increase the FAC to 10 ppm, lower the pH to 6.8 - 7.0 and a water temperature of 20°C, or

- c. Use a commercial treatment that utilizes an alternative disinfectant / oxidizer (Accelerated Hydrogen peroxide or Chlorine Dioxide). Follow manufacturer's instructions.
4. Perform a backwash procedure as appropriate for your type of filter. Cartridge filters may need to be removed and inspected for damage before being installed.
5. Run the water through the circulation system for at least 4 - 6 hours.
6.
  - a. Completely drain and refill the basin, or
  - b. Reduce the chlorine to normal operating levels through chemical addition, by dilution, or
  - c. Neutralize the alternative disinfectant/oxidizer (e.g. Accelerated Hydrogen Peroxide or Chlorine Dioxide).
7. Rebalance the pool water chemistry. Ensure recirculation rates and chemical parameters are in accordance with Section 3.0 and 4.0 of the [Pool Standards, July 2014 \(Amended January 2018\)](#).
8. Submit a microbiological water sample.
9. Confirm with your local public health inspector that your microbiological water sample was satisfactory. Pools are not permitted to reopen until a satisfactory microbiological result is received.

Pool operators are encouraged to call [Environmental Public Health](#) to discuss any questions they have about reopening or to request an inspection.

Owners and operators of buildings should also consider risks to the building water system. Due to low or zero occupancy and reduced water flow, stagnant water with declining disinfection residual may have created an environment which supports the growth or proliferation of disease-causing organisms. Follow the [Guideline for Flushing Water Systems](#) for mitigation strategies.

Ensure all guidelines and recommendations for operating a pool and environmental cleaning are adhered to. Whirlpools, dry saunas and steam saunas are to remain closed until Stage 3.

[Public Health Recommendations for Environmental Cleaning of Public Facilities](#)  
[COVID-19 Information – Guidance for Swimming Pools and Whirlpools](#)  
[COVID-19 Information – Guidance for Outdoor Spray Parks and Wading Pools](#)