

FAQs to support changes to the Public Health Protection Act Order and lifting some restrictions

May 15, 2020

Messages:

We are easing some restrictions, but we need to do this safely by continuing to follow public health directives:

- physical distancing (staying 2 metres or 6 feet apart)
- no social gatherings of more than 5 people
- good hygiene – washing your hands or using hand sanitizer often
- sneeze or cough into your sleeve
- avoid touching your face

People can also consider using non-medical masks when they are out in public and physical distancing is challenging or cannot be consistently maintained, such as when you are in a grocery store.

Q&As

What restrictions are lifted and when?

Effective May 16:

- Beaches can re-open.
- Golf courses can re-open. People can use washrooms and change rooms only.
- Outdoor facilities for archery, paddling, tennis, equestrian activities and sailing can re-open. No coaching, classes or competitions can take place. People can use washrooms and change rooms only.

Effective May 15:

- Nova Scotians can create immediate family bubbles

Effective May 1:

- Trails, and provincial and municipal parks can open
- Community gardens can open
- Garden centres, nurseries and similar businesses can open
- Sportfishing from shore or boat is allowed
- Boating is allowed
- Boating, yacht or sailing clubs can open for the purpose of preparing boats for use
- Golf driving ranges can open
- Cottage can be used
- Drive-in religious services, as long as people stay in their cars, are parked 2 metres apart, and have no interactions between cars or between cars and others

For now, playgrounds, and campsites remain closed. There can be no organized sports, tournaments, derbies, regattas, etc.

Why are some restrictions being lifted and not others?

It is critically important we take a measured approach to lifting restrictions, so we don't undo all the progress made. This will be a slow, deliberate process, and these are the first steps in the recovery plan. Government is developing the overall plan and continues to consult with stakeholders to help them prepare to re-open safely. We will continue to share more details about these plans with Nova Scotians.

What is an immediate family bubble?

This means two immediate family households can come together without physical distancing. This could mean parents, siblings, grandparents. If you don't have immediate family to bubble with, you can choose one family to be in your immediate family bubble. It's up to you to figure out who. Whoever you choose, your two households will have to promise to be mutually exclusive. This is a first step toward opening up our social networks in a measured way.

How many people can be in an immediate family bubble?

There is not a limit on the number of people. But it can only be members of two households.

How do I decide who to have in my immediate family bubble?

There are some key questions you should consider:

- Is anyone at higher risk – 65 or older, especially with underlying health conditions, chronic disease, or compromised immune systems?
- Does anyone have frequent contact with the general public as part of their job or a higher risk of being exposed to COVID-19?
- Is anyone sick or showing symptoms that could be COVID-19?

What if someone is not a spouse or blood relative, can I consider them my immediate family?

Ideally you would choose someone who is immediate family to be in your bubble. But we know that won't work for everyone. If you don't have immediate family to bubble with, you can choose one family to be in your immediate family bubble. It's up to you to figure out who. Whoever you choose, your two households will have to promise to be mutually exclusive.

What if two parents in separate households share custody of children? Do they form a bubble with these two households? Or can each household form a bubble with another?

A shared custody arrangement is already a bubble. If each parent had another bubble it creates additional risk for all of the households involved. Public health strongly recommends that in a shared custody arrangement no additional bubbles are created.

Do I need a bubble if to socialize with a few friends?

Bubbles are only for immediate family in two households. For everyone else, the public health order allows for social gatherings of 5 people or fewer while maintaining 2 metres/6 feet distance.

What if someone in my immediate family has a health condition?

It would be best to avoid increasing that person's risk by being in close contact with them.

Why are facilities for golf, archery, paddling, equestrian, sailing and tennis allowed to open and not other sports?

These are generally individual sports that can be done outdoors with people easily staying 2 metres apart. There are also facilities for these sports and the associated provincial organizations have created plans to ensure they are able to re-open safely, following public health directives. There can be no practices/coaching/lessons, no spectators, no tournaments/regattas/competitions, etc.

Indoor parts of these facilities can only open for people to use washrooms and change rooms, with only 5 people at a time and physical distancing. They can offer take-out food only.

How many people can do these sports together?

Most of these sports can be done individually – tennis and golf are the exception. There is no limit to the number of people who can be at an outdoor facility at one time, but the nature of these facilities means it's easy to maintain physical distance. If you're paddling with others, they should have their own boat and remain 2 metres apart, unless you're sharing a boat with a member of your household or your immediate family bubble. Only 5 people can be in a washroom or change room at a time.

Are other individual activities able to reopen? Why not?

No, only facilities for archery, equestrian, golf, paddling, sailing and tennis can re-open. These activities are generally for individuals. They can be done outdoors and safely without the need for an official sport program, while also following important public health measures.

How were these sport activities chosen for reopening?

These were sports recommended by Sport Nova Scotia. These are generally individual sports that can be done outdoors with people easily staying 2 metres apart. All of these sports have provincial organizations that have created plans. Dr. Strang is comfortable they can resume safely, under certain conditions. It's important to note that this is an interim step and we'll be monitoring closely.

Can we organize a game of soccer, catch or street hockey in our neighbourhood?

No you shouldn't organize any games because they lead to close contact. If you're kicking a ball with a neighbour and can stay 2 metres apart, that's fine. You can play a game with people from your own household or your immediate family bubble.

What are the specific conditions for these sports?

- Do not go to one of these facilities if you are unwell.
- These activities must take place outdoors.
- They must be done while maintaining least 2 metres physical distance (except within a household group or immediate family bubble).
- Facilities must limit access to indoor areas (i.e. washrooms, changing rooms, equipment rooms) to 5 people at a time, while maintaining physical distance.
- Equipment cannot be shared (except within the same household group or immediate family bubble).
- Equipment should be cleaned and disinfected before and after use.
- Facilities should remind people about proper hand hygiene before and after the activity and provide water/soap or hand sanitizer if feasible.
- Facilities should remind people to practice good cough etiquette and not touch their face.

When will other sports activities be allowed to reopen?

Consultation is underway to support the development of "return to play" plans for individual provincial sport organizations that will be considered for inclusion at further stages in the provincial COVID-19 recovery plan.

Will all the facilities, courts, clubs, fields associated with these sports be open this weekend?

They will be allowed to open as of 8 a.m. Saturday so long as they meet the required conditions. It is best to check first with a facility before you go.

Which beaches are open?

The public can access any provincial or municipal beach, excluding beaches within provincial park campgrounds. Though provincial parks and beaches are not serviced or maintained right now, they are now available for the public to use at their own discretion provided they can adhere to public health orders and maintain a safe physical distance from others outside their immediate household.

Can I drive to a beach?

Yes. Parking lots may be open where available but physical distancing rules must always be followed, even in parking areas.

When will provincial parks open and services resume?

Park properties are open for the public to use at their own discretion. Right now, we're looking at how to safely open services and facilities to the public. Our plan will include steps to keep visitors safe, including extra cleaning of common facilities, signage and measures to encourage physical distancing, and counters to make sure capacity limits are respected. We want everyone to feel safe while they're enjoying their visits to our parks, beaches and trails so we'll communicate the plan, so everyone knows what to expect when visiting.

Are boat launches open?

Boat launches are only open in day use parks until campgrounds open for the season, but you must keep a safe physical distance from others outside your immediate household, per provincial health orders.

What if the park gate is closed?

Gates will start opening Saturday, May 16. If the gate is closed and the parking lot is not accessible, entry by foot is permitted.

When will campgrounds open?

Date for opening campgrounds have not yet been determined. This decision will be made as part of the province's overall COVID-19 recovery plan.

What restrictions remain in place?

Playgrounds and group use buildings remain closed and all park events are cancelled until at least June 30.

Are all municipal parks and trails now open?

As of May 1, provincial and municipal parks are allowed to be open, and trails that were closed are allowed to be open. As of May 16, this also includes trails along and through beaches. People are encouraged to enjoy what is available in their local community, while maintaining physical distance.

Can I meet my friends to walk on a trail, go ATVing or fish together if we maintain social (physical) distance from each other?

You can do outdoor activities with people in your own household or in your immediate family bubble. You must stay 2 metres or 6 feet apart from anyone else. ATV riders should refrain from using shelters as a gathering place.

What restrictions are in place for all of the activities and places that are now open?

Any business or service that opens must manage and limit the number of people there at one time. Physical distancing of at least 2 metres or 6 feet must be maintained. As well, thorough environmental cleaning is required – frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces is critical as well as frequent cleaning of any rental equipment (e.g. golf clubs).

Can I invite my bubble family to my cottage or seasonal camper, or a few friends if we maintain physical distance?

You can invite people in your immediate family bubble to your cottage without physical distancing. If you invite friends, you must maintain 2 metres distance and you can't have more than 5 people at once. Please continue to designate one person to get supplies, limit the number of trips you make, and continue good hygiene practices.

Can I go boating and use the beach at my cottage?

You can use the beach at your cottage. Boating is also allowed provided you are boating with people in your household or immediate family bubble.

Can we go to stores in groups?

We continue to advise against unnecessary travel or gatherings, and ask that people continue to designate one member of their household for essential errands or tasks.