COVID-19 Transitioning – Obligatory Conditions and Guidelines for Spas and Saunas

These following obligatory conditions are issued under the Public Health Act Chapter 465 of the Laws of Malta and require strict adherence. Failure to adhere to these conditions will result in enforcement procedures as provided by the Act.

Mandatory conditions to be observed in Spas and Saunas

The Superintendent of Public Health hereby orders that all Spas and Saunas shall implement the following measures:

(a) exercise the right of refusal of entry into the Spa or Sauna areas of customers if they are visibly unwell or have respiratory symptoms;
(b) customers shall be subject to temperature checks at entrance for the presence of fever and those with a temperature of 37.2°C Celsius or higher shall be denied entrance;
(c) ensure that inside the Spa / Sauna and walking areas every person keeps a minimum of 2 metres from others;
(d) Ensure that maximum capacity of clients inside the Spa / Sauna area at any one time is one person per four (4) square metres, including staff;
(e) Customers to bring their own towels and supplies;
(f) Steam baths, steam inhalations, brine inhalation and the caldarium shall remain closed.
(g) Locker rooms and changing rooms can be used as long as they are well ventilated. Lockers can be made available as long as they are clearly labelled and disinfected after each use.
(h) Showers and changing areas are to be disinfected every hour
(i) affix visible signage at the entrance of the Spa/Sauna indicating the maximum capacity that the Spa/Sauna can hold at any one time;
(j) indicate with visible markings outside and inside the Spa/Sauna two (2) metre distances that customers shall respect whilst queuing for services;
(k) provide an appropriate 70% alcohol hand-rub at the entrance of the Spa/ Sauna and ensure that all persons sanitise their hands prior to entrance;
(l) provide ongoing cleaning and disinfection operations of all the common areas and also inside the Spa/Sauna itself
(m) Ensure that measures are taken so that seating is not permitted in common areas.
(n) ensure that customers and staff always wear a face visor whilst inside the Spa/Sauna itself
(o) ensure that no items which come into direct contact with the body are re-used
Principles for business continuity
Recognising that the COVID-19 pandemic is a public health emergency and that business continuity in respect of COVID-19 should be founded on expert public health advice and on social dialogue, the following principles shall apply:

- All employees, regardless of their occupation or how they are engaged, have the right to a healthy and safe working environment.
- The COVID-19 pandemic requires a focused approach to work health and safety as it applies to spas and saunas.
- To keep spas and saunas healthy and safe, employers must, in consultation with employees and their representatives, assess the way they work to identify, understand and quantify risks and implement and review control measures that address those risks.
- As COVID-19 restrictions are gradually relaxed, employers and employees must work together to adapt and promote safe work practices consistent with advice from public health authorities and to ensure that spas and saunas are ready for the social distancing and exemplary hygiene measures that are critical to the success of the transition.
- Employers and employees must actively control against the transmission of COVID-19 while at work, consistent with the updated advice from the public health authorities.
- Employers and employees must prepare for the possibility that there will be cases of COVID-19 in the workplace and be ready to respond immediately, appropriately, effectively and efficiently, and consistent with specific recommendations from public health authorities.

How COVID-19 spreads
COVID-19 presents with coughing or sneezing which release droplets of infected fluid. Most of these droplets can fall on nearby surfaces and objects - such as counters, display items, desks, tables, or telephones. Other frequently touches surfaces such as door handles, intercoms, lift buttons are other surfaces which are frequently touched by customers and employees and can become contaminated. People can catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects – and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. Standing within two metres of a person with COVID-19 for a prolonged period, one can catch the disease by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them. In other words, COVID-19 spreads in a similar way to flu. Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some go on to experience more serious illness and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness rises with age. People with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are also more vulnerable to serious illness.

Duties of the employers and employees
Employers have the duty to consult with employees on health and safety matters relating to COVID-19. Employers must give employees the opportunity to express their views and raise their concerns. Employees are most likely to know about the risks of their work. Involving them will help build commitment to any changes that employers need to implement. Employers must advise employees of the outcome of consultation.
Adapting Spas and Saunas to manage and mitigate the risk of exposure to COVID-19 requires a thorough risk assessment. These guidelines provide considerations that employers must make when deciding on control measures such as restrictions within these facilities to allow for social distancing, the adequacy of facilities for proper personal hygiene, cleaning arrangements and other changes that may affect the health and safety of employees. Consultation does not require consensus or agreement, but employers are strongly advised to allow employees to be part of the decision-making process for COVID-19 related matters.

Guidelines for the application of COVID-19 mitigation measures in Spas and Saunas

Safety and sanitation in the Spa business are essential for health, from preventing infection and improving employees and guest’s overall well-being.

The guidelines developed in this document were created to provide comprehensive advice on Spa and saunas operation during the Pandemic of COVID-19. The guidelines are meant to implement the principles of basic hygiene and social distancing within each area of the spa/sauna to support the business during these unprecedented times.

Hairdressing, beautician services, massage, fitness centres, gymnasiums and other services offered within the facility shall fall under the specific mandatory conditions for mitigation measures for the Covid-19 transition phase issued under the Public Health Act chapter 465 which are available on www.covid19health.gov.mt

These guidelines are not intended to replace existing Laws, licensing requirements or regulations.

Guidelines on Pool Safety


Ventilation

☐ Ensuring that ventilation systems of indoor spaces operate properly and in accordance with the legal requirements.

☐ Increasing introduction and circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods, except if doing so poses a safety risk to clients
Water Systems
✓ Taking steps to ensure that all water systems are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of Legionnaires’ disease and other diseases associated with water. All legal requirements and mitigation measures as required by Legal Notice 5 of 2006 for the Control of Legionella are to be adhered to at all times.

Sauna Safety
✓ There is no evidence that high temperatures kill the virus. Furthermore, COVID is known to survive on wood for 4 days.
✓ It is recommended that people do not go in them if they are feeling ill in any way.
✓ Normal cleaning with moderately a cleaning agent (mild soap) should be suitable. It is recommended that however these saunas are sprayed at regular intervals with sanitizing spray.
✓ Sterilize all areas overnight by utilizing ozone machines or appropriate chemicals.
✓ Consider limiting thermal use to members of one household per booked appointment slot, with time in-between sessions for cleaning

Steam Rooms, Steam baths, brine inhalation and caldariums
✓ Steam rooms are normally a hard plastic or ceramic surface and operate at substantially lower temperatures 40°C or so with 100% humidity. The hard surface, temperature, and humid conditions means the virus may be more likely to survive.
✓ **Steam baths, steam inhalations, brine inhalation and caldariums shall remain closed.**

General Precautions to be taken
✓ Fully clean and sanitise treatment rooms after each treatment/service, replacing all linens with freshly laundered items
✓ Wear gloves when handling all linens (soiled or clean)
✓ Minimise use of common spaces
✓ Ensure that sick guests stay in their rooms.
✓ Customers must respect the facility’s cleaning and hygiene standards
✓ **All facilities should maintain a guest or visitor log** to facilitate any need for contact tracing. In particular records shall be kept of the sections where the client was provided any treatment/service and the staff involved in providing it. Where possible, maintain visitor contact information for up to 30 days in order to assist public health officials in the event necessary. If an individual who tests positive for COVID-19 has been present
at the facility, facilities should work with local health authorities regarding continued operations

- Maintain a 2-metre distance between the loungers. The total number of loungers is reduced accordingly. Customers should keep to the same lounger, while disinfection should be carried out between use.

- There shall be a limit on the number of persons per sauna. Most saunas are small and thus in line with the social distancing/area requirements only one person per four (4) square meters may use the sauna at any point in time. Exceptions can only be made for persons already sharing the same household/accommodation.

- Air conditioning systems must be fitted with filters whose high efficiency reduces the risk of infection.

- Users must always sit or recline on towels.

- Towels can be disposable or else will need to be laundered at a temperature of 60 degrees Celsius after each client. The same applies to any linen and bathrobes. Ideally clients should get their own towels and bathrobes, or alternatively they can buy a towel+bathrobe pack from the reception.

**Scheduling Appointments**

- Ensure sufficient turnaround time between bookings allowing for hygiene protocols. Consider limiting thermal/sauna use to one guest per booked appointment slot, with time in-between sessions for cleaning.

- Advise clients that walk-ins will not be accepted and that only clients with an appointment will be accepted.

- A booking reminder shall be sent to the client also asking about any recent symptoms of Covid 19 (such as Cough, Fever, Breathlessness, Headaches, Sore Throat, gastrointestinal disturbances and loss of taste/smell) and in which case advising the client to cancel the appointment and contact COVID Public Health Helpline 111.

- Refunds for cancellations due to health reasons should be freely available to avoid persons coming to the spa or sauna when sick.

- Group bookings are not recommended, and the total number of persons admitted should nonetheless never exceed those in the legal mandatory specifications and the current recommendations. Couples and members of the same household are allowed to book as a group.

**Recommendations for the Staff and Workstations**

- A face mask should be worn by all employees at all times

- Workstations should be at least 2 meters apart.

- Where possible workstations should not be shared unless sanitized between use.

- Hand sanitizers should be available at each workstation.

- Hands should be sanitized before coming into contact with guests/employees including handling letters of confirmation/information and before preparing mail to be posted.

- If sharing a workstation, a sanitization check list is recommended for before and after shifts. Reservation supervisor is to ensure these logs are being completed daily.

- Each employee uses their own pen during shift and commit only to using their pen. If needed, flag pen with tape labelled with employee’s name. Guests pens are sanitized
after each use.

✓ Ensure each employee maintains their own workspace and does not use each other's workspace. If unavoidable, sanitize area before/after use.

✓ Place hand sanitation stations and wipes around the Spa/sauna for guest and employee use.

✓ Practice social distance measures by marking floors in the Spa reception. Based on Spa size and lay-out configure Spa check-in to one area and Spa check-out to another area.

✓ Consider limiting the amount of time guests can use the locker room facilities to avoid overcrowding.

✓ Wipe down all surfaces after use including headsets, telephones, desk, keyboards, credit card machines, mouse, laptops etc. with disinfectant spray/wipes before the start of each shift and at the end of each shift.

✓ Every hour wipe down guest's side of the desk, including pull out trays, folio folders, pens, etc.

✓ Every 30 minutes and depending on traffic volume, clean and disinfect all door handles and high contact areas

** Locker rooms**

✓ Guests should change into robe and slippers to avoid the guest walking with their shoes within the spa. Walking barefoot should be avoided.

✓ Lockers must be assigned to each guest in consideration of social distancing guidelines.

✓ Any offered amenity kits shall be individually wrapped and disposable amenity kits.

✓ All areas should contain a hand sanitation station or sanitation wipes.

✓ Lockers must be sanitized after each use by the attendants.

✓ Attendants must wear gloves and masks when removing dirty linen and items from linen baskets or trash cans.

✓ All door handles and doors must be sanitized on a regular basis. It is recommended once every 30 minutes.

✓ Information should be provided to guests during the booking and members should be notified through the normally used communication media such as websites, social media and monthly newsletters.

**Ice rooms, ice fountains, inhalation rooms**

✓ These should remain closed and should not be available due to the mild/cold temperature and humidity.

**Relaxation Lounges:**

✓ Space out all furniture to comply with social distancing guidelines.

✓ Remove blankets, neck pillows and extra cushions from lounges and chairs.

✓ Food and beverage offerings must be individually wrapped and single use.

✓ Headphones for TV’s, music etc must be disposable, or else use the clients’ own.

**Treatments and Treatment Rooms**

✓ Masks shall be worn by both the employees and clients except when it is not practical for the client to keep the mask on due to the nature of the treatment
Ensure treatments have 30 minutes in between each service to allow for treatment room cleaning and sanitation. Provider must wipe down counters, bottles, cabbies, jewellery box, head rests and treatment tables.

Providers must spray and sanitize all skincare bottles and products used after each treatment.

Remove from treatment rooms: bed skirts, duvets, pillows, runners, table warmers and mattress pads. All linen in the treatment bed must be used and washed after each guest.

As a recommendation, employees should keep a spare clean uniform at work, so they can change during their shift if they feel it is required. Disposable aprons or gowns are acceptable. Alternatively, providers should clean and disinfect their uniforms by spraying a skin safe disinfectant after each treatment.

Maintain HEPA air quality machine in each treatment room

Treatment providers shall wash their hands before and after the treatments.

Ensure autoclave cleaning is utilized with bags for additional measures. Ensure each autoclave bag is opened during the guest service (allow guests to see implements are in autoclave bag as an added safety measure)

Based on the facility’s size and availability, ensure providers alternate treatment rooms to avoid using the same room and allow treatment rooms to air out.

Promoting good hand and respiratory hygiene

Employers must direct employees and customers to practice good hygiene inside Spa or Sauna. Good hygiene requires regular washing of hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and drying them with a clean paper towel. Employees must wash their hands before and after eating, after coughing or sneezing, after going to the toilet, when changing tasks and after touching potentially contaminated surfaces. When it is not possible to wash hands, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% ethanol or 70% alcohol as the active ingredient must be used as per the manufacturer’s instructions.

Good respiratory hygiene requires everyone at the Spa or Sauna to, at all times:

- avoid attending the spa if they have any symptoms
- avoid touching their face, eyes, nose and mouth
- clean and disinfect shared equipment and machinery after use
- have no intentional physical contact, for example, shaking hands and patting backs.

To enhance good hygiene outcomes:

- train employees on the importance of washing their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and drying them correctly or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser, before entering and exiting a common area
- place posters near hand washing facilities showing how to correctly wash and dry hands and clean hands with sanitizer,
- inform employees of hygiene standards expected when utilising common areas (cleaning up after use, placing rubbish in bins provided, avoiding putting items such as phones on work surfaces, etc.).
- keep communicating and promoting the message that people need to stay at home
even if they have just mild symptoms and to return to work 24 hours only after they are symptom free.

- persons who develop a mild cough, fever (i.e. a temperature of 37.2°C or higher), shortness of breath, headaches, tiredness, loss of taste, loss of smell or diarrhoea, should call the public health helpline on 111 giving details of their symptoms.

- Provide more bins for people to dispose of any used tissues / items.

- Encourage the use of contactless payments, without disadvantaging older or vulnerable customers. Ask for the exact payment and provide employees with disposable gloves if they must collect money from customers. One pair of gloves per customer is to be used and used gloves are to be thrown away safely after use.

- Display posters with these messages in the Spa or Sauna. Please contact the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate on 2326600 or visit www.covid19health.gov.mt. Combine this with other channels commonly used for communication in your business.

### Fig. 1: 10 steps to wash your hands properly

#### Hygiene facilities
The Management must ensure there are adequate and accessible facilities to achieve good hygiene and that facilities are in good working order, clean and safe. The management must also consider whether there are an adequate number of hand washing stations, in convenient locations, to sustain the increase in good hygiene practices of employees and customers. Washroom facilities must be properly stocked and have adequate supplies of toilet paper, soap, water, and drying facilities (paper towels). Employers may also need to provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer in appropriate locations, if there are limited hand washing facilities available.
When determining what facilities are needed, the management must consider the number of employees on site, the shift arrangements and when access to these facilities is required. If employers have temporarily down-sized worker numbers in response to COVID-19 and these will now be increased, employers must take this into account to determine the facilities needed before employees return to work.

Water dispensers and water fountains are not to be used. Clients are to be encouraged to bring their own water. Alternatively, small bottles for personal use can be provided for single use.

Rubbish bins must be cleared regularly and as often as necessary.

Employers should consider opening windows or adjusting air-conditioning for more ventilation in common areas. Avoid or reduce recirculated air-conditioning where possible.

Social distancing
Social distancing refers to the requirement that people distance themselves from others. Public Health Authorities have determined that everyone must keep at least 2 metres from others and that in any given closed space, there must be 4 square metres of space per customer.

Employers should consider and adjust the layout of the Spa or Sauna and workflows to enable employees and customers to keep at least 2 metres apart and that ‘10 square metres of space per person’ rule excluding staff is respected. This can be achieved by, spreading out furniture to increase distancing.

Put signs and markings outside the entrance of the Spa or Sauna to identify 2 metres distance. Inside the Spa or Sauna create wall or floor markings to identify 2 metres distance, focusing particularly where customers queue such as at checkout counters or service points.

Employers should also review tasks and processes that usually require close interaction and identify ways to modify these to increase social distancing between employees themselves and between employees and customers (e.g. payment counters).

Layout of the Spa or Sauna
Employers may need to redesign the layout of the Spa or Sauna and workflows to enable employees and customers to keep at least 2 metres apart to continue performing their duties and the Spa or Sauna activities. This can be achieved by, where possible:
✓ restricting employees and/or customers and others to certain pathways or areas, and
✓ spreading out furniture or fittings to increase distancing.

If changing the social layout of the Spa or Sauna, the layout must allow for employees to enter, exit and move about the both under normal working conditions and in an emergency
without risks to their health and safety.

Deliveries, contractors, servicing technicians and visitors attending the Spa or Sauna

Non-essential visits to the Spa or Sauna should not be allowed. Family members of staff, particularly children, should not be allowed inside Spa or Sauna. Minimise the number of employees attending to deliveries and contractors as much as possible. Delivery drivers and other contractors who need to provide maintenance or repair services or perform other essential activities, should be given clear instructions of requirements while they are on site.

Ensure hand washing facilities, or if not possible, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, is readily available for employees after socially handling deliveries. Direct visiting delivery drivers and contractors to remain in vehicles and use contactless methods such as mobile phones to communicate with employees wherever possible. Direct visiting delivery drivers and contractors to use alcohol-based hand sanitizer before handling products being delivered.

Use, and ask delivery drivers and contractors to use, electronic paperwork where possible, to minimise social interaction. Where possible, set up alternatives to requiring signatures. For instance, see whether a confirmation email or a photo of the loaded or unloaded goods can be accepted as proof of delivery or collection (as applicable). If a pen or other utensil is required for signature, ask that the pen or utensil is cleaned or sanitised before use or use your own.

Do I need to provide personal protective equipment to employees who are in close contact with each other or with customers for prolonged periods of time?

The management must ensure employees comply with social distancing requirements where possible. In circumstances where the nature of the task requires employees to be in close contact, put control measures in place that minimise the time employees spend with each other or with other people in the spa. Employers must also ensure employees are practicing good hygiene.

If the Management has a situation where, despite other control measures, employees will be in close contact with each other or with other people for longer than the recommended time (i.e. more than 15 minutes face to face cumulative over one day or more than 2 hours in a shared closed space), consider the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Employees must be trained in the proper use of PPE. Be aware of risks that may arise as a result of employees using and wearing PPE. Personal protective equipment (PPE) can be used to supplement the other control measures put in place to protect against COVID-19 including good hygiene measures, social distancing, environmental cleaning and providing employees with information and training. The Management must implement more control measures to protect against COVID-19 than only PPE.
The type of PPE to be provided will depend on your Spa or Sauna and the outcomes of risk assessment. Common PPE that can be used to protect against COVID-19 include masks, gloves, eye protection, and screens. *The use of certain types of masks, gowns and disposable suits is restricted to healthcare settings. It is not recommended that these types of PPE are used outside of healthcare to protect against COVID-19.*

Eye protection, in the form of safety glasses, goggles or a face shield, can be used as PPE for protecting against the risks of COVID-19. Eye protection can assist to act as a physical barrier from droplet spray and prevent unintentional rubbing of eyes between hand washing. Eye protection may be necessary for employees who are in close proximity to droplet spray. For many Spas or Saunas, eye protection will not be a required control measure. Good hygiene practices should be followed if eye protection is used.

**Do I need to provide masks to employees?**
The advice of the Public Health Authorities at this stage of the pandemic response is to wear a face mask or visor when entering closed spaces in order to enhance the effects of social distancing.

In these guidelines, customers and staff are being directed to wear a mask or visor at all times whilst inside a Spa or Sauna. It is the responsibility of the Management to provide appropriate masks or visors to their employees. The Management must also provide appropriate training and instruction on how to put on and fit, wear, remove and dispose of masks and on how to put on, remove and sanitise visors. Information about using masks or visors is provided by the manufacturer. If a worker has been provided training and instruction about using a mask or visor, they must comply with that training and those instructions.

**Do I need to provide gloves?**
Gloves will not normally be necessary in many Spas or Saunas. A risk assessment must be conducted to help inform what gloves, if any, are appropriate for the Spa or Sauna. If the Management choose to supply or use gloves, they should make sure the gloves are suitable for the work; not all gloves are appropriate for all work or workplaces. Be aware that wearing gloves may result in new risks. For example, wearing disposable gloves could cause skin irritation, contact dermatitis or other sensitivities in some employees.
When providing gloves, employees must be trained in how to put on, use, remove and dispose of gloves (Fig. 2). The Management must provide the appropriate facilities to use gloves properly including a hand washing area and appropriate products and a sealed bin for disposal. Even if employees wear gloves in the Spa or Sauna, the Management should ensure that employees have good hygiene practices including washing or sanitizing hands frequently.

For more information on proper use of gloves, visit [www.covid19health.gov.mt](http://www.covid19health.gov.mt)

**Cleaning and disinfecting measures**

A combination of cleaning and disinfection will be most effective in removing the COVID-19 virus. Spas/saunas must be cleaned at least daily. Cleaning with detergent and water is sufficient. Once clean, surfaces can be disinfected. When and how often the Spas/saunas...
should be disinfected will depend on the likelihood of contaminated material being present. Alternatively, cleaners may be able to do a 2-in-1 clean and disinfection by using a combined detergent and disinfectant.

How to clean and disinfect
Cleaning means to physically remove germs (bacteria and viruses), dirt and grime from surfaces using a detergent and water solution. A detergent is designed to break up oil and grease with the use of water. Anything labelled as a detergent will work. Cleaning should start with the cleanest surface first, progressively moving towards the dirtiest surface. When surfaces are cleaned, they should be left as dry as possible to reduce the risk of slips and falls, as well as spreading of viruses and bacteria through droplets.

Disinfecting means using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. It is important to clean before disinfecting because dirt and grime can reduce the ability of disinfectants to kill germs. Disinfectants containing ≥ 70% alcohol, ammonium compounds, chlorine bleach or oxygen bleach are suitable for use on hard surfaces (surfaces where liquids pool, and do not soak in). The packaging or manufacturer’s instructions will outline the correct way to use disinfectant. Disinfectants require time to be effective at killing viruses. If no time is specified, the disinfectant should be left for ten minutes before removing.

Which areas should be cleaned and disinfected, and how often?
Any surfaces that are frequently touched should be prioritised for cleaning, e.g. door handles, counters, phones and POS machines, Perspex screens (if installed) and sanitary facilities (such as toilets). Any surfaces that are visibly dirty, or have a spill, should be cleaned as soon as they are identified, regardless of when they were last cleaned.

Workplaces should be cleaned and disinfected every day. If the SPA, Sauna, Indoor pool and Wellness areas has many customers entering each day, more frequent disinfection is recommended. If the work environment e.g. warehouse, administration, offices, etc. is only attended by the same small work crew each day and involves little interaction with other people, routine disinfection in addition to daily cleaning may not be needed.

What should cleaners wear?
In most circumstances, it will not be necessary for cleaners to wear protective clothing to clean the SPA, Sauna, Indoor pool and Wellness areas. However, employees should use personal protective equipment (PPE) that is necessary for the products they are using. Gloves and a disposable apron are the minimum requirements. Medical masks should be used if cleaning an area impacted by a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case. Clothes that can be washed afterwards are suitable.