

Swimming Pool Guidance

These notes are intended to provide a framework for a return to diving following easing of government restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance is based on current knowledge and understanding of the risks associated with the outbreak and the current scientific evidence informing decisions by government and other relevant authorities. It is acknowledged that the evidence base and knowledge surrounding the outbreak is rapidly and continually evolving and so the guidance will be reviewed regularly and be subject to update and amendment as appropriate.

STATUS

Currently in the UK different criteria applies within each of the devolved administrations. Please refer to the [STATUS document](#).

Protecting others and reducing the demands on the NHS

Current advice on avoiding transmission of the virus can be found on the Government Website. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

The advice for anyone in any setting is to follow these main guidelines:

- The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of a new continuous cough and/or high temperature. If you have these symptoms, however mild, stay at home and do not leave your house for 7 days from when your symptoms started (if you live alone), or 14 days (if you live with someone who has symptoms). You do not need to call NHS 111 to go into self-isolation. If your symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after 7 days, contact [NHS 111 online](#). If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.
- Wash your hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds using soap and hot water, particularly after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose, or after being in public areas where other people are doing so. Use hand sanitiser if that is all you have access to.
- To reduce the spread of germs when you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or your sleeve (not your hands) if you don't have a tissue, and throw the tissue in a bin immediately. Then wash your hands or use a hand sanitising gel.
- Clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces using your regular cleaning products to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.

Anyone displaying any symptoms should NOT engage in any activity outside the home.

Ensure you are not showing any symptoms of Coronavirus (temperature, cough, difficulty breathing, or loss of smell and/or taste).

At the height of the pandemic significant social distancing rules were in place as a legal requirement. Thanks to significant measures applied to control the spread, including the vaccination programme, most restrictions on group size and social distancing have been removed. The following guidance provides advice on appropriate safety precautions that can still be taken to help ensure the safety of all persons engaged in these activities.

The best initial precaution is for all divers to check their own medical condition and consider the use of lateral flow testing prior to departure and not travel if testing positive or showing symptoms.

Swimming pool use

The water in swimming pools is normally chemically treated to provide an environment that would destroy any virus within a very short contact time. Social distancing measures may need to be considered to ensure that pool users who may have the virus but are asymptomatic do not place others at risk from their exhaled breath. General advice for divers will be consistent with that provided within the training, shore diving, snorkelling and equipment guidance documents already published by BSAC.

Clubs should liaise with their pool facility management to ensure that their activities are able to comply with the facilities Covid-19 secure procedures and contribute to keeping staff and other pool users safe.

Supporting the swimming pool staff

Before leaving home, and in order to reduce the time spent in changing areas and on the poolside, consider the following guidance:

- Plan and prepare for the session well in advance, consulting with swimming pool management, and share with your instructors and safety team. This should include transporting equipment safely to the poolside, avoiding pinchpoints and how to achieve social distancing when not fully kitted and breathing gas from scuba
- Conduct the session briefing prior to attending the swimming pool via phone or online media. Alternatively consider briefing in the open air outside the pool facility
- Arrive ready to enter the water as soon as possible and get out of the pool ready to leave with minimal delay
- Shower at home before you arrive and shower once again back at home after you've used the pool
- Showers may be available at the facility but by arriving wearing your swimwear under your outdoor clothing and showering at home pre and post diving you will help minimise time spent in the changing rooms and help maintain the water quality
- Check facility guidance on any preferred arrival time frame for participants, parking, travel arrangements and plan your journey accordingly
- Take hand sanitizer with you
- Take any equipment with you and follow advice given below
- Ensure you have any booking confirmation required as part of the facility guidance

At the swimming pool facility

- Please follow facility guidance on arrival, for the duration of pool activity and post pool use arrangements
- Whilst in the building and the pool, follow the facility guidance on social distancing, direction of travel and other risk control measures that are put in place
- Remember that scuba provides an additional level of protection only when mask and regulator are in place or when underwater. Be more cautious when using a mask and snorkel as they do not provide the same level of protection
- Use hand sanitizer/wash stations wherever made available
- Spend as little time as possible in the changing rooms whilst following facility guidance on maintaining safe levels of distance.

In the pool

- Follow facility guidance directions for entry and exit to the pool
- Ensure that the area allocated for your use is marked off so as to clearly separate scuba divers, snorkelers and swimmers. Do not allow scuba divers to swim underneath snorkelers and swimmers.

For club training in swimming pools the Organised Events Guidance www.bsac.com/document/organised-events-guidance/ should be applied as an important control measure for ensuring safe group activities.

Diving equipment

In order to alleviate any concerns that equipment brought into the pool could pose a risk of carrying the virus, all equipment should be clean and fully dry. Any loose equipment such as fins, mask and snorkel should be clean and dry and contained in a clean, dry bag or container. Scuba sets should be carried as individual items. Cylinder valves should be covered or taped for protection. Regulator and BC mouthpieces should also be covered or bagged for protection. After use and before removal from the pool all mouthpieces and any other equipment that has been in contact with a divers face should be fully immersed and agitated in the chlorinated water of the pool to rinse off any saliva that may be contaminated with the virus.

Scuba training

Refer to training guidance document

Snorkelling

Refer to snorkelling guidance document

Equipment Storerooms

Many clubs have negotiated and agreed for equipment storage facilities within swimming pool/leisure complexes. Such storage facilities are normally maintained secure from the public but can be in areas shared with staff. It is essential that any club with such facilities agrees with the facility management appropriate protocols for access, cleaning and hygiene for such areas and minimising social contact.

The guidelines for club compressor and storerooms may be applicable.

Additional information

Remember that this guidance provides no guarantee that COVID-19 will not be transmitted in the swimming pool environment, as with all environments there is still a level of risk that requires control measures to be implemented.

Pool staff are required to comply with the Health & Safety at Work Act and are operating in accordance with the following guidance:

The Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group (PWTAG) Code of Practice (www.pwtag.org);

The Swimming Pool Water Book (www.pwtag.org);

PWTAG Technical notes (www.pwtag.org);

The European Standard EN 13451 Swimming pool equipment (Parts 1–11)

HSG 179 – Health & Safety in Swimming Pools

Swimming pool operators commonly disinfect our swimming pools with a chemical known as chlorine and will also often supplement the primary disinfection with a secondary disinfection method in the form of UV light, this enables them to state with confidence that COVID-19 would not be transmissible through the swimming pool water if the pool is operated in line with this guidance and that of PWTAG. When you add chlorine to water, a chemical reaction occurs, and a weak acid called hypochlorous acid is formed. This acid is able to penetrate the cell walls of microbes like bacteria and viruses, so it can attack and kill germs effectively.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/water.html>

To be used in conjunction with other guidance including:

- Medical guidance
- Status
- Equipment guidance
- Shore diving
- CPR and rescue procedures
- Diver Training
- Travel Guidance
- Charter boat diving
- RIB diving
- PPE guidance
- Organised Events
- Etc.