



**babylon**

# **Gyms & Pools**

## Reopening Guide

Babylon's Guide On How To  
Keep Safe When Gyms & Pools Reopen



The government has announced that outdoor pools will reopen from 11 July and indoor gyms, swimming pools and sports facilities will reopen from the 25th of July, ensuring millions of people can get back into more sport and fitness activities.

The government has provided a guide for gyms, pools and leisure centres and their customers and staff.

Here at Babylon, we want to help provide useful information for those who wish to return to gyms and pools safely. Our Babylon doctors have answered people's questions about how safe it is and what they can do to reduce the chance of infection.



## Gyms & Leisure Centres

### When will indoor gyms and pools open?

Indoor gyms, pools, sports halls and leisure centres will now be able to reopen from 25th of July.

They will have to follow strict social distancing guidelines, including:

- Reduced capacity limits, controlled by a timed booking system, usually a one hour max slot
- Smaller class sizes
- Equipment spaced out and improved ventilation
- Enhanced cleaning and provision of hand sanitiser
- Temporary floor markings where possible
- Customers will be encouraged to shower and change at home, unless swimming. However gyms are advising customers to bring their own towels
- Personal trainers and swimming coaches will have to wear personal protective equipment such as face coverings, in the same way as hospitality workers

Outdoor gyms have been open since the 4th of July because there is less risk of catching coronavirus when outdoors.

Indoor gyms are due to reopen in Northern Ireland on the 10th of July. No date has yet been set in Scotland or Wales.





# Is it a good idea that gyms and pools reopen during a pandemic?

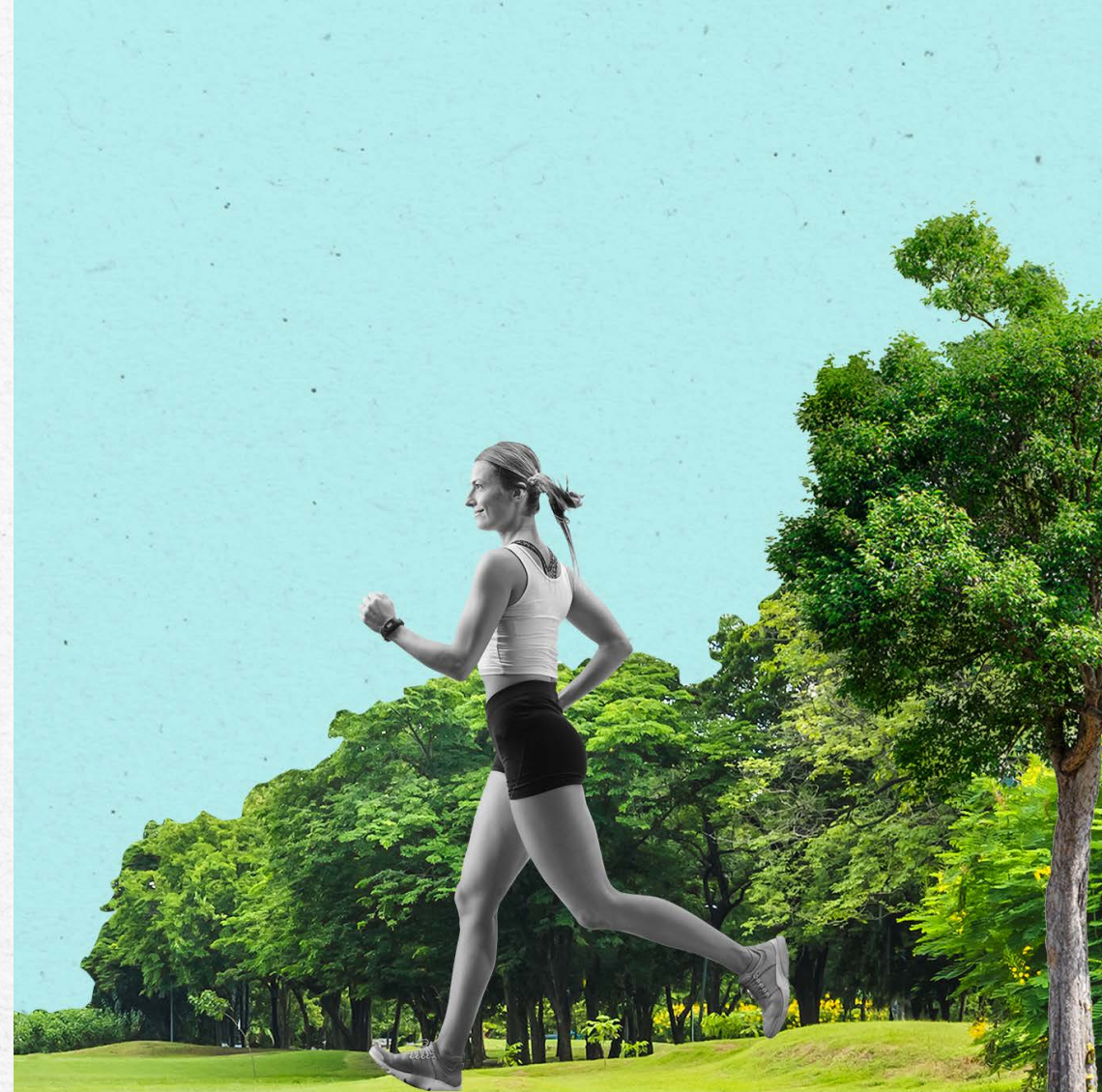
**Babylon GP, Dr Claudia Pastides:** “For some people, this may be the only way they can exercise because they need the space, facilities or support, however, for most people, and from a medical perspective - exercising outdoors should currently take preference over indoor exercise.

Exercise in a gym often involves breathing out heavily, touching equipment that has been touched by others and being in (often quite close) contact with others. All these things increase the risk of spreading and catching COVID-19.

If you're at an increased risk from falling seriously unwell with COVID-19, I'd recommend avoiding gyms for now and focussing on ways to keep fit outdoors or at home.

And it is important to remember that even if you are not at an increased risk or you personally accept the risk of yourself catching COVID-19, many people with the infection show no symptoms. So if you go to the gym, it is important to do everything you can to reduce your risk of spreading COVID-19 as you may be that person that has it without knowing.

If you've considered these risks, cannot or do not wish to exercise outdoors and choose to go to the gym - there are things you can do that may reduce the risk, although a significant reduction in risk is unfortunately not guaranteed.”





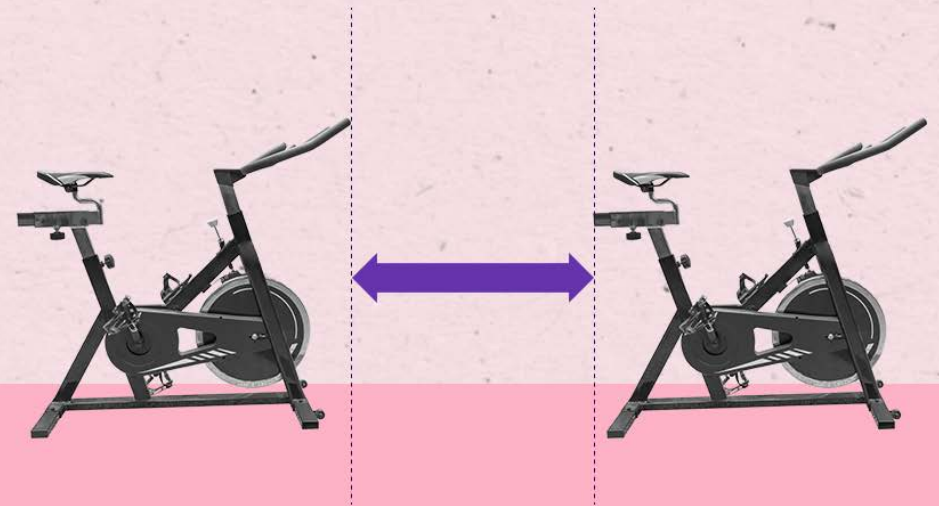
## How can I protect myself and others from catching and spreading the virus whilst exercising at the gym?

**Babylon GP, Dr Claudia Pastides:** “From a medical perspective, exercising outdoors should take preference over indoor exercise. Exercise in a gym often involves breathing out heavily, touching equipment that has been touched by others and being in (often quite close) contact with others. All these things increase the risk of spreading and catching COVID-19.

If you’ve considered these risks, cannot or do not wish to exercise outdoors and choose to go to the gym - here are a few things you can do that may reduce the risk, although a significant reduction in risk is not guaranteed.

Firstly, of course the same advice as usual applies - don’t go if you’re unwell, avoid touching your face whilst out of the house and with unwashed hands, cough/sneeze into tissues or your elbow (not your hands) and wash your hands regularly.

Try and go at a time when the gym is less busy, so you come in contact with as few people as possible.”







## What should I take in my gym bag to help protect myself from the virus?

**Babylon GP, Dr Claudia Pastides:** “Take a disinfectant spray or wipes with you and clean down any equipment before you touch it and after you touch it. Don’t just clean the handles but also the screens and any buttons on the equipment. Bring water with you and don’t drink from any communal water fountains. Take hand sanitiser and wash your hands as you arrive, when moving from one piece of equipment to another and after you’ve left the gym. Make sure to put your gym kit, towel and any face coverings straight into the wash as soon as you get home.”

## When I’m exercising at the gym what should I avoid/do to prevent catching the virus?

**Babylon GP, Dr Claudia Pastides:** “Try to keep 2 metres apart from other people at all times. If this isn’t possible, keep at least 1 metre apart. Don’t use the changing rooms. Arrive in your gym kit and leave in it. Shower at home. Check with your gym whether masks are required or not. Some exercise may be hard to do whilst wearing a mask. Also don’t forget that a damp mask is an ineffective mask. As masks are likely to get wet and sweaty very quickly when exercising, bring a fair few masks with you so you can put a clean one on when the one you’re wearing gets damp.”



Can I really be carrying the virus even if I'm feeling well enough to do a strenuous exercise session?

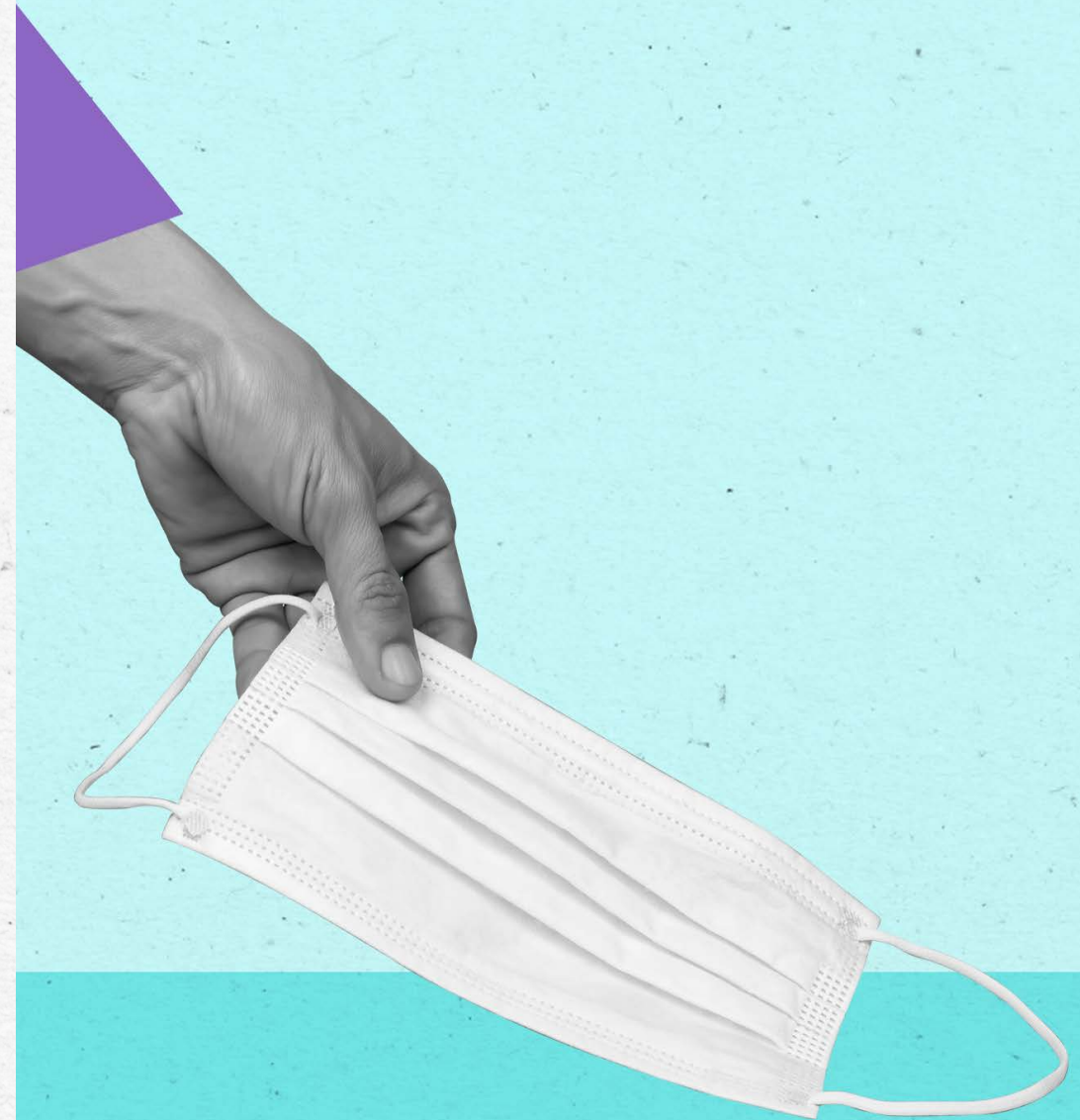
Babylon GP, Dr Claudia Pastides: "We know from research that as many as 80% of people infected with COVID-19 have mild or no symptoms at all. So it is entirely possible that you can carry and spread the virus, despite feeling perfectly well enough in yourself to exercise as normal."





## Do we need to wear a face mask while exercising in the gym?

**Babylon GP, Dr Claudia Pastides:** “The official guidance around face masks and face coverings is changing pretty regularly. Currently there is no guidance on if you should wear face masks when exercising in the gym, and from a practical perspective - it might be difficult to do some types of exercise whilst wearing a mask, in particular exercise that will cause you to breathe heavily (for example running). However, other types of exercise may be doable whilst wearing a mask and there's likely to be no harm if you want to wear a mask when doing lighter exercise classes or using equipment that doesn't make you especially out of breath. Just make sure to bring spare masks with you and change them if they get damp/sweaty, as a damp mask doesn't work as well as a dry mask.”







## Should you wear gloves when using gym equipment, like weights/TRX?

**Babylon GP, Dr Claudia Pastides:** “The problem with gloves is that they offer a false sense of security. People are more likely to wash their hands than wash their gloves or change them frequently. In theory it is possible for gloves to carry a virus and spread it on to whatever else is touched, whether it be a dumbbell or your eyes/nose/mouth.”

## Why should we avoid using changing rooms?

**Babylon GP, Dr Claudia Pastides:** “Changing rooms are often crowded confined spaces, used by many people. We know that COVID-19, like most other infectious diseases, spreads more when people are in close contact and using shared spaces. Research is still ongoing into how SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) behaves on different surfaces and how long it survives for, but we know from other types of coronaviruses that they can live on surfaces for anything between hours and days.”



## Swimming Pools

Will the chlorine levels in the pool kill the COVID-19 virus?

Babylon GP, Dr Claudia Pastides: “The World Health Organization says that swimming in a well-maintained, properly chlorinated pool is safe. According to [The Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group \(PWTAG\)](#), the available research shows that a combination of water, chlorine and pH level could inactivate the COVID-19 virus within 15-30 seconds.”





## How can I stay safe when swimming, both in outdoor ponds and indoor pools?

**Babylon GP, Dr Keith Grimes:** “To stay safe and reduce risks, swimmers should follow all the usual public health guidelines where possible - maintain social distance, wash your hands regularly, and wear a face covering when in enclosed spaces. Of course, once you're in the pool some of these things aren't possible. We don't currently have any evidence that a well-managed pool presents a risk of transmission of COVID-19, so you should try and minimise your risk getting to and from the pool - spread out the visits to quieter times, consider changing at home, and make sure you follow all the measures put in place at the leisure centres.”

Whilst at the pool, the following additional precautions might reduce the risks:

- A one way in and one way out system for getting in and out of the pool
- Poolside teachers and instructors maintaining social distancing
- For children's swimming lessons, just one carer being present and that person maintaining their distance from others
- Being as quick and efficient as possible when using changing rooms, whilst maintaining strict social distancing throughout







## Training Advice from our Physiotherapists

I haven't exercised in a while and I'm concerned that I may injure myself when I return to the gym, what do I need to keep in mind when I start training again?

Babylon physiotherapist, Peter Thornton: "It is important to make sure when you return to the gym or any exercise you haven't done in a while, that you make it a gradual return. Sudden sparks in either load, volume or frequency can lead to injuries. The best way is to start with a reduced load or volume of what you were previously doing and aim to build back up to this over 2-4 weeks."



## If I injure myself, am I able to see a physiotherapist in person?

Babylon physiotherapist, Peter Thornton: "Yes you can but they are very limited at the moment due to COVID-19 restrictions and often have a long wait. I would recommend seeing a physiotherapist via Babylon for an initial assessment. They can advise what your injury is, what has caused the injury and what is the best treatment. They will be able to prescribe exercises and any lifestyle changes required to help treat this as well as to help prevent future recurrence. If you do require a face to face appointment you can also book this via Babylon too."







## I ran a lot during lockdown, how do I know if my trainers should be replaced?

Babylon physiotherapist, Katrina Beans: "It is always a good idea to check your trainers regularly however if they were a new pair just before lockdown it is unlikely you have worn them down. An easy way to gauge when your trainers are not doing the job is by checking the tread on them like you would a tyre. If there is no tread left, or the bottom of the shoe feels smooth, it's time for a change. Check for the depth of tread on the outer borders versus the inner aspect, as well as any differences from one foot to the other. A lot can be seen from our shoes and if you are wearing one shoe down differently than the other one that can be a sign of gait problems you may not have noticed yet. If in doubt, book an appointment via Babylon and have a chat with one of the team, we will be happy to guide you."





### Information

For more information about Babylon or health advice  
from our doctors, please contact the press team:

Email: [press@babylonhealth.com](mailto:press@babylonhealth.com)