

When Can Rock Gyms Reopen?

April 24, 2020

in [CWA Blog](#)



In the US, the administration announced a plan for “Opening Up America” on April 16th. There is some confusion about this plan since no timeline was provided and it leaves a lot of the specifics up to individual businesses and local authorities. It is also important to note that states that do allow for reopening are doing so only when meeting what has been termed “gating criteria”.

In order for a state to reopen, they must have realized a downward trend of both flu like and coronavirus like symptoms within a 14 day period, seen a downward trend in documented COVID-19 cases, maintained or increased current testing volume, had a downward trend of positive test results in a 14 day period, and had hospitals transition to treating all patients without crisis care.

Gyms are broadly included in Phase 1 of this program, but there is not clear guidance on what you should be thinking about when making the choice to reopen. The [official plan](#) only states that “gyms can open if they adhere to strict physical distancing and sanitation protocols.”

Unfortunately, there is not great clarity on what exactly is meant by sanitation protocols or physical distancing. Currently the US advises individuals to avoid socializing in groups greater than 10 people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing. Sanitation protocols are also not defined in an appropriately detailed manner. However, you can turn to [your local health department](#) for the most relevant guidance for your business. When it comes to following regulations these organizations and your city government will be the most direct authority in the US.

Similarly, in many of the countries that have more advanced pandemic timelines than the US,

some gyms may be able to make the choice to reopen beginning in early May. Many of these countries may receive stronger guidance from their local authorities, but some decisions will still be up to individual owners. It is important to be aware of what laws you need to follow locally. Any policies that you create should be, at the very least, in alignment with WHO recommendations.

The WHO has developed some [risk assessment tools](#) for mass gatherings, and these may be one of the most authoritative ways to evaluate what level of risk is present in your gym. The WHO has even updated these guidelines with information specific to [sporting events](#). These guidelines may be more directly applicable to the public areas of climbing gyms than the general [workplace guidance](#), which is more suitable to office environments.

At the CWA, we are working to accelerate the publishing of our guidance for you in these areas. We have started two committees to help advise on the resources we've been gathering and developing. One committee is focused on the hygiene and cleanliness guidelines which are most applicable and appropriate for an indoor climbing gym. The other committee is focused on reopening policies and procedures. As quickly as possible, the CWA will publish a digital white paper similar to our [Coronavirus Resource Hub](#) which will be updated real-time as new science emerges over the coming months.

It is important to remember that all of this does not mean that you must reopen. When making that decision keep in mind your brand, your customer's attitudes, and your needs as a business. A hasty decision now could have unintended consequences for your business for years. Whether that is the way that your community perceives your attitude or the way that your policies may lead to new expectations from your members. But, no matter what you decide, make sure that you communicate openly and often with your members to make sure that they know what you are planning and why.

Your customers cannot wait to get back to the gym, and when you feel it is the right time to reopen your core customers will be there for you. Even though we are all faced with a mountain of uncertainty at the moment, the future still looks bright for climbing.



About the Author

Garnet Moore is the Director of Operations at the Climbing Wall Association. Garnet brings more than a decade of experience in the climbing industry, including his time as the COO at Brewer's Ledge.



**FOLLOW UP ON REMAINING
HYGIENE BRAINSTORM
QUESTIONS**

April 27, 2020

**MEMBER ENGAGEMENT SERIES:
HOW TO START A BLOG FOR
YOUR CLIMBING GYM**



April 23, 2020

