

Multiple Swimmer & Single Lane Swimming for Competitive Swimmer/Club Training – Risk Mitigation



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LEGAL DISCLAIMER

Swimming Canada prepared this document, in consultation and partnership with Lifesaving Society Canada, based on the latest information available to date from third-party sources, including the World Health Organization and local public health authorities. The document may be updated periodically as the situation evolves and more information becomes available.

This document is meant to provide information and guidance as to best practices based on current information. All owners, operators, clubs, coaches, lifeguards are responsible for assessing the risks in their particular environment and establishing the appropriate safety procedures to minimize those risks, while following the advice, guidelines and directions of their Provincial section/branches and instructions of public health and government authorities.

Additionally, it is an individual's responsibility to assess his or her personal risks in consultation with medical professionals and for the outcome of his or her decisions and actions.

PURPOSE

This document reflects a collaboration between Swimming Canada and Lifesaving Society Canada. Its purpose is to describe how, with proper risk mitigation strategies, multiple swimmers can train in a single lane with minimal risk of COVID-19 transmission during competitive/club swim training.

The information contained within this document does not replace or supersede local, provincial/territorial or federal health authority guidelines. Please consult your provincial/territorial authority for guidelines specific to your province.

RATIONALE

Over the past few months, there have been many successful examples of how to operate a swim training session with one swimmer per lane and multiple swimmers in single and double lanes. As more clubs have returned to training, it has become apparent that multiple swimmers training in a single lane is an essential option for clubs. This document outlines the rationale as to how and why single lane training can be done safely and in accordance with the Government of Canada risk mitigation strategies.

The [Government of Canada's](#) community-based measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Canada indicate that minimal risk can be maintained by avoiding prolonged close contact within 2m of other individuals. As has been demonstrated over the past few months, the physical distancing of 2m can be strictly maintained when athletes and staff are in static positions, including during on-deck instruction, waiting at the wall, assembling at whiteboards, etc. However, multiple swimmers can train within a single lane with appropriate guidelines and protocols in place to ensure that any close interaction briefly occurs when athletes pass each other on opposite sides of the lane.

Some provincial/territorial health authorities have permitted sport activities to resume using cohorts/bubbles to train without physical distancing. Swimming Canada and Lifesaving Society Canada support this progressive approach to return to training and as such the guidelines below may not apply to the provinces who have resumed training using cohorts/bubbles. **The provincial guidelines of both the health authority and provincial section/branch take precedence in these instances.**



Provinces currently permitting cohort strategies are:

1. British Columbia (contact Swim BC)
2. Alberta (contact Swim Alberta)
3. Nova Scotia (contact Swim Nova Scotia)

GUIDELINES FOR SINGLE LANE TRAINING WITH MULTIPLE SWIMMERS

There are two main ways in which multiple swimmers can train within a single lane. The first is where all swimmers leave from the wall to start their interval. The second is where swimmers start and finish their interval from a fixed position in the pool (not necessarily the wall). For example, to maintain physical distancing, a swimmer may start and stop at the 15m-mark on each interval. These are two examples of ways in which multiple swimmers may train in a single lane environment but there may be others that clubs have found that work and meet provincial guidelines.

In both instances, the training group size must fall within any local group gathering limitations that are in effect. The limit on group size will need to reflect the number of available lanes, lane configuration, and deck space (for physical distancing where required).

General guidelines (apply to both scenarios described above):

- Where physical distancing protocols are in place, swimmers are not to assemble at the wall. Only one swimmer per lane, per end of the pool can be waiting at the wall at a time.
- The endpoint of any swimmer's length is the same as their initial starting point at the beginning of the set.
- Distancing can be easily achieved through placing similarly proficient swimmers in the same lane, as well as modifying the gap between swimmer send-offs so that no swimmer overtakes another in the lane.

Scenario 1: All swimmers using the wall to start their interval.

- The waiting swimmers not starting from the bulkhead/wall first must be positioned to allow 2m of space for the starting swimmer to push-off and commence the length.
- Once the initial swimmer at the wall has departed on their interval, the second swimmer can move in to leave.
- Once the first swimmer has departed on their interval, they must not breathe until they pass the waiting swimmers on the adjacent lane line. The second swimmer can move into the wall to depart on their interval, and the subsequent swimmer that was at least 4m away from the wall can move to the closer waiting position. After the second swimmer departs, the third swimmer can move into the wall to leave on their interval.

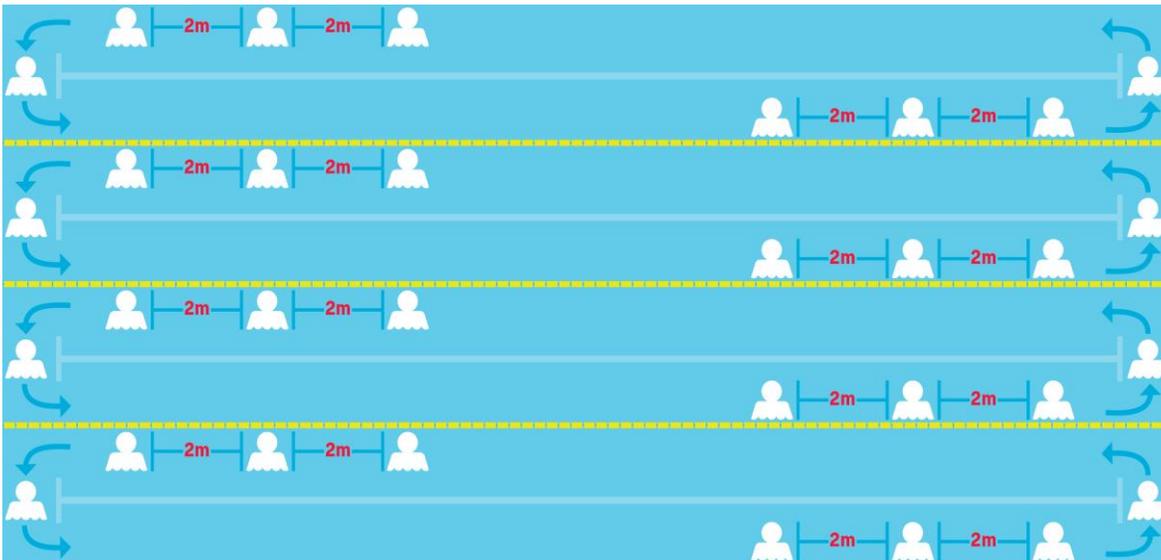
The following images illustrate how physical distancing can be achieved and maintained in single-lane scenarios while swimmers are at rest. It is crucial to clearly define a swimmer's start/finish point as all swimmers will be unable to assemble at the wall to maintain physical distancing.



Scenario 1 (Short Course)



Scenario 1 (Long Course)



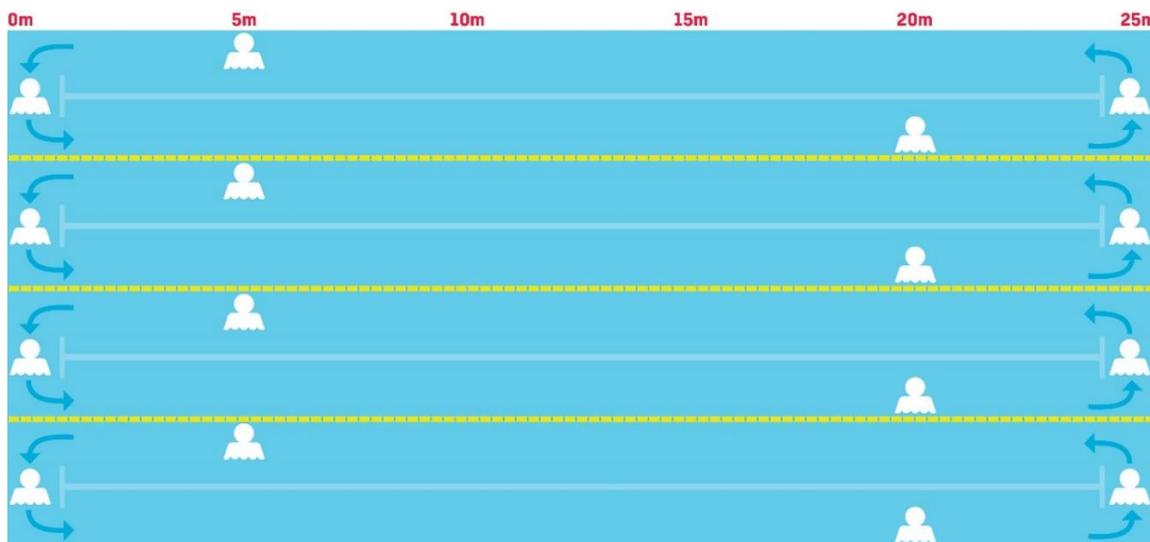


Scenario 2: All swimmers departing from a fixed spot in the pool.

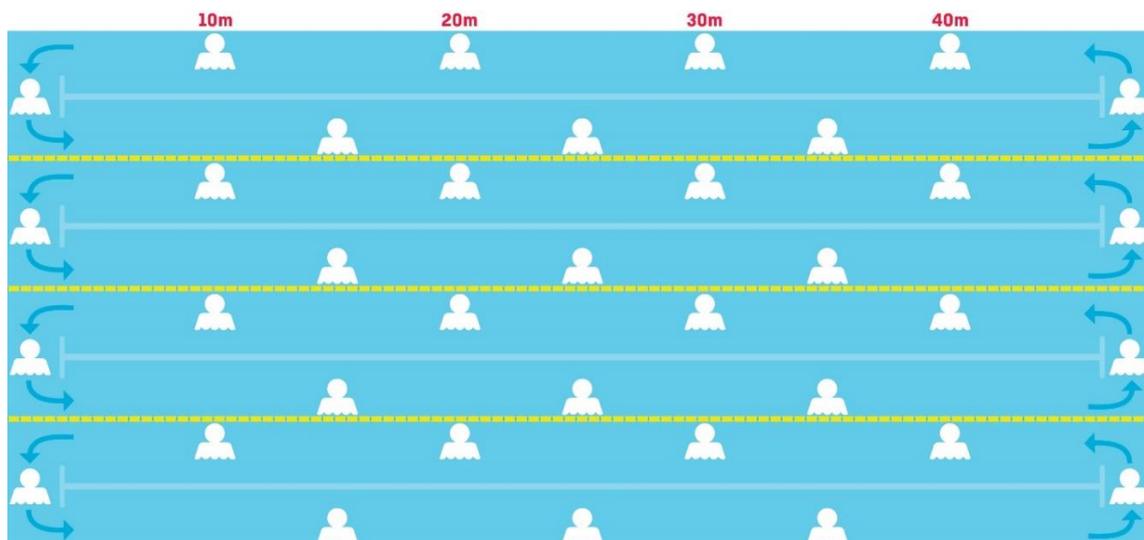
- All swimmers not starting from the wall must allow sufficient space along the lane line (e.g. 5m or 10m apart)
- All swimmers begin their interval from their set position, and all swimmers start at the same time.
- All swimmers return to their set position at the end of their interval. For example, a swimmer who starts at the 15m-mark and does a 100m repeat stops at the same 15m-mark to complete the repetition (e.g. in a long course format: 15m swim, turn, 50m swim, turn, 35m swim = 100 m).

The following images illustrate how physical distancing can be achieved and maintained in single-lane scenarios while swimmers are at rest. It is crucial to clearly define a swimmer's start/finish point as all swimmers will be unable to assemble at the wall to maintain physical distancing.

Scenario 2 (Short Course)



Scenario 2 (Long Course)





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NUMBER OF SWIMMERS PER LANE

The number of swimmers that can swim in a single lane should be determined based on the following factors

- 1) What is the maximum gathering size in effect locally?
- 2) What are the requirements around physical distancing in effect locally?
- 3) What, if any, are the density restrictions in effect locally (e.g. # of people/square metre)?
- 4) Are there any other provincial/territorial or facility specific considerations that need to be accounted for?

Given the specificity of the factors described above, Swimming Canada and Lifesaving Society Canada do not have a specific recommendation on the optimal number of swimmers per lane.

ASSESSING THE RELATIVE RISK OF SINGLE LANE SWIMMING

Assessing the relative risk of particular activities has become commonplace across various activity types common to North America. Appendix A shows how the Government of Canada has categorized various activities in terms of relative risk. While swimming in a public pool lies within the medium risk category, we believe that this particular assessment is based on public swimmers as opposed to a controlled training environment. Swim clubs and programs consist of athlete populations that are under constant supervision and instruction during a training session. As such, it is our opinion based on medical expert input that swim club training in a controlled scenario as described would be equivalent to the activity of running/biking/hiking with others

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Swimming Canada and Lifesaving Society Canada are firmly committed to a safe and responsible return to sport. Upon closely monitoring and reviewing the past eighteen weeks of program operations, we believe that we have demonstrated how we can further expand programming and facility options through an increase in swimmer lane ratios for competitive club swimmer training. The presented scenarios can address the critical risk factors for the spread of COVID-19 described on the Government of Canada website. As well, the scenarios allow for swim programs to maintain physical distancing as much as possible and mitigate any risks around the relatively close proximity of other athletes breathing through controlled and supervised training session protocols. We believe that these recommendations are in line with other Government guidelines. While there will never be a zero-risk situation under the current pandemic, we believe that we have presented a minimal risk situation.



APPENDIX A – GOVERNMENT OF CANADA GOING OUT SAFELY RISK ASSESSMENT

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/covid-19-going-out-safely/2020-07-31-risk-assessment-en.pdf>

APPENDIX B – GOVERNMENT OF CANADA RISK MITIGATION STRATEGIES

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/mass-gatherings-risk-assesment.html>

Furthermore, we have gone through the Government of Canada's series of questions on how to understand and mitigate risk for gatherings.

Q: Will attendees have close interactions with one another? Close interactions are defined as those within 2 metres of others. Close interactions are presumed to have greater risk of transmission than interactions at a distance.

A: Briefly, at most when swimmers pass each other mid-pool while swimming.

Q: Will attendees have prolonged close interactions with one another? Prolonged exposure is defined as lasting for more than 15 minutes of time being less than 2 metres away, and may be cumulative (i.e., over multiple interactions). Person-to-person spread is more likely with prolonged close contact.

A: No. Any close interaction will be momentary and the cumulative exposure will not exceed 15 minutes cumulatively in a day.

Q: Will the gathering/event involve activities that may increase the potential of droplet spread, such as singing, cheering, playing wind instruments, or sharing food or drinks? Gatherings/events with activities likely to generate droplets are presumed to have greater risk.

A: Yes, the act of breathing in swimming would be considered similar to the above situations. However, competitive swimmers generally expire their breath underneath the water and when their face exits the water they are only inhaling air. Additionally, with appropriate instruction and monitoring, swimmers can choose to breathe away from others or hold their breath when passing swimmers coming back in the opposite direction within a lane. As such, this risk can be mitigated in a controlled and supervised environment.

Q: Will attendees frequently have contact with high-touch surfaces (i.e. frequently touched by others)? A higher frequency of contact with high-touch surfaces (e.g., washrooms, door handles, service counters, electronic equipment, communal items such as religious artifacts, card payment machines) is presumed to have greater risk.

A: The only frequently contacted surfaces during training would be the lane lines and bulkhead. Both surfaces are constantly being rinsed with the chlorinated pool water.

Q: Will the gathering/event be indoors or outdoors? If indoors, can windows be opened? A confined indoor space (e.g., gym, place of worship, sweat lodge) is presumed to have greater risk.

A: Most training will take place indoors but in a very controlled environment that has the appropriate operating procedures in place that adhere to all provincial/territorial health requirements.



Q: Will the gathering/event be crowded (i.e. high density of people in close proximity)? A crowded setting is presumed to have greater risk.

A: No. The training group would be limited based on provincial/territorial health authority guidelines on gathering size as well as availability of lane space.

Q: Will the gathering/event last a few hours (e.g., party, wedding, concert) or several days (e.g., conference, tournament, pow wow)? Gatherings/events that last longer and/or require overnight accommodation (either at the setting or in close proximity) present more opportunities for transmission due to increase duration, frequency and intensity of interactions between attendees and are presumed to have a greater risk.

A: Training sessions typically last 90 to 120 minutes. There would be no real increase in the interaction of swimmers within a training group regardless of duration. The scenario as described in this document presents an operating model that nearly eliminates all close interactions.

Q: Will the gathering/event be offered to multiple groups of attendees in a limited period (e.g., overlapping of groups, back-to-back groups)? Repeated gatherings/events (e.g. multiple faith services) in a limited timeframe present more opportunities for exposure, either from others or from contaminated surfaces/objects if proper mitigation strategies are not implemented, and are presumed to have a greater risk.

A: No. Each training group is completely independent of all others. Permitted overlapping of training groups, would only occur as per local requirements.

Q: Will the gathering/event be held at one single location/venue or multiple locations/venues? Gatherings/events that are spread out over multiple locations/venues, where attendees travel between sites, provide more opportunities for the introduction of the virus and are presumed to have a greater risk.

A: Each training group is limited to the facility at which their club or program operates.

Q: Will the gathering/event include attendees who are at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19?

A: Generally, no. Age group swim clubs consist of relatively younger and healthy individuals. This is not an at-risk population. Masters club programs would follow all the same protocols and health safety checks and generally consist of healthy, active individuals.

Q: Will the attendees be able/likely to follow hygiene practices such as frequent hand washing or sanitizing, respiratory etiquette, physical distancing, and isolating themselves if they feel ill? The ability of attendees to comply with these practices routinely and at the gathering/event will depend on a number of factors including age, maturity, physical or cognitive ability, and an environment that enables and supports these practices. For example, if attendees consume substances that could impair their judgment before or during the gathering/event, these attendees may be less able/likely to comply with personal preventive practices.

A: Yes. Clubs across the country have been able to demonstrate a safe and controlled return to sport over the past three months.