



What Medical Experts Say About COVID-19 and Health and Fitness Clubs

Medical professionals agree: Health clubs are safe and exercise is vital

"Many fitness centers are taking necessary precautions to do their part while also providing an essential service to the public—enabling Americans to take care of their physical and mental health. In states reopening across the country, thousands of fitness centers have developed, in coordination with local and national public health officials, stringent safety and sanitization protocols to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19."

- Kenneth P. Moritsugu, M.D., MPH, president and CEO of First Samurai Consulting, LLC, and former Deputy Surgeon General and Acting Surgeon General of the United States

"As a physician in the community, I have seen firsthand how shutdowns have negatively impacted both physical and mental health. In the medical world, it is well known that depression and anxiety weaken our immune response and leave individuals more susceptible to illness and to severe complications from illness. One way to fight depression and anxiety is through physical movement and exercise. Countless studies have shown that high risk individuals include those who are overweight or suffer from diabetes and underlying heart disease. It is these high-risk individuals that would benefit most from healthy lifestyle activities including physical fitness. Now more than ever, it is imperative for people to take care of their physical and mental health. Gyms offer a safe outlet for people to achieve stress relief and self-care."

- Andrea Stout, MD, Salem, OR

"Fitness plays a critical role in combatting the virus and improving people's overall physical and mental health."

- Kenneth P. Moritsugu, M.D., MPH, president and CEO of First Samurai Consulting, LLC, and former Deputy Surgeon General and Acting Surgeon General of the United States

"I am on the front lines of caring for individuals who suffer from diseases such as obesity heart disease, diabetes, anxiety and depression. All of these diseases have been linked to a sedentary lifestyle. These diseases can be prevented and managed by proper exercise and nutrition. *Many individuals do not have the ability to exercise from home* and require exercise facilities to provide the needed equipment and coaching to fulfill their physical activity needs."

- Tyson Flohr, MS, CRNA, Registered Nurse Anesthetist, Albany, OR

"I believe the closing of gyms is an arbitrary declaration without significant scientific backing. In reviewing the OHA data there appears to be very little to any origination from gyms particularly when adequate precautions are put in place."

- Keith C. Neaman, MD, Surgeon, Salem, OR

“Being able to get out and safely be active is so essential for remaining physically independent, relieving stress, staying connected relationally (which has been linked to overall mortality rates), managing mood, and, in some cases, staying sober.”

- Lori Deemer, M.D., the medical director of the Hancock Wellness Centers, in Hancock County, IN, and a board member of the Medical Fitness Association (MFA)

“As a nurse, I am frustrated that gyms are closed. Exercise is an important part of preventative strategies for many chronic conditions. Research suggests that regular exercise may reduce the risk of acute respiratory distress syndrome, a major cause of death in patients with the COVID-19 virus. Exercise protects us and boosts our immunity, which is the biggest defense mechanism with COVID-19 prevention.”

- Julie Davis, RN, Director of Nursing for a skilled nursing facility in Keizer, OR

“I understand we all need to do our part to keep each other safe. We need to stay home if sick, wear masks, not touch our face, and wash our hands. Exercise is another way to keep ourselves safe. When one does not exercise regularly, the immune system gets a major boost. We know coronavirus is opportunistic and there are fewer opportunities for severe illness in the “healthy community” of those who eat healthy and exercise. PhysiQ mandates face masks and every member in attendance has their own bottle of disinfectant to use on all surfaces. I feel very safe at this gym despite having a son with stage IV cancer who is currently receiving chemotherapy...This decision to close gyms moves Oregonians more towards depression and disease and away from health and wellness.”

- Jeffrey R. Blanchard, PT, MS, OCS, Director of Physical Therapy, Salem, OR

“In July, a study from Clinical Experimental Medicine showed that physical exercise can serve as a tool to help the immune system against COVID-19. Then again in October 2020 another study went to prove that exercise is a useful adjuvant in the setting of COVID-19 management/rehabilitation. Exercise has proven to help us to prevent and rehabilitate from COVID-19...The gyms are an essential place for people who need to maintain their health.”

- R. Tyson Scott, DPM, Current President of Oregon Podiatric Medical Association

“Patients have been flooding our clinic and those across the country in desperate need of physical rehabilitation. PT clinics are seeing record numbers of chronic pain patients since the pandemic began. Most of these patients rely on their independent exercise routine to remain pain-free and to stay off of opioids for pain control. The first round of gym closures sent hundreds of these patients into our clinics. It will take weeks of rehabilitation to get them off of pain medication and regain the confidence to return to the gym...My chronic pain patients will lose years of progress without access to an affordable gym to maintain their health.”

- Rolund Cochrun, Doctor of Physical Therapy, Owner Capstone Physical Therapy