

Covid-19 Guidance: Tips for blind and partially sighted gym users

This guide has been written by blind and partially sighted people working with Sight Loss Councils.

Gyms are reopening in England on the 25th July. Below are some guidance notes on what you can expect and the steps you can follow to stay as safe as possible.

Not all gyms have the same layout, facilities and equipment. We have contacted some gym chains to make them aware of the difficulties many blind and partially sighted people face. We would recommend you contact your local gym in advance to make them aware of your needs, so they can make reasonable adjustments.

What to expect

A number of alterations may have taken place in your local gym during lockdown including:

- A one-way system to ensure social distancing is maintained and some gyms may have separate entrance and exit routes.
- A revised layout, ie separate zones to reduce the amount of movement taken around the gym while exercising.
- A reduction in equipment allowing it to be spread out.
- A new regime asking each user to clean equipment before and after use.
- You may need to book a slot so that customer numbers are controlled.
- New hygiene requirements may be in force such as washing/ sanitising your hands before using each piece of equipment.
- Limited access to locker facilities, including showers, steam rooms, saunas, and spas.

What you can do

The likelihood is that your gym will contact you in advance to make you aware of changes and what is required of you. It is important you feel confident and safe in returning so here are some tips on what you can do:

- Contact your gym before you go to make them aware of your visual impairment and arrange for a member of staff to meet you on arrival.
- Request an orientation in advance to allow you to become familiar with the new layout.
- It may be an opportunity to ask for a demonstration on how to use the equipment if any upgrades have been introduced.
- Ask what is required of you to clean the equipment before and after use. Verbal prompts may not be enough and a practical demonstration more beneficial.
- You will need to know where the sanitising stations are located.
- If you rely on touch to find an empty locker, let staff know. They may be able to provide a designated locker for you that is easy to locate.
- Take your own filled water bottle and avoid relying on water fountains.
- Take your own towel and wash it when you get home.
- You may need to arrive at the gym ready for your work out as there may be limited changing and shower facilities at the gym.