

Media Release:

FROM: SwimTastic

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LET PEOPLE IN AUCKLAND SWIM WITH PRE-BOOKED TIMES

One of Auckland's leading swim schools is calling on the Government to allow Auckland swimming pools to open to those who book pre-allotted times and who meet certain requirements.

"With the Government effectively keeping Auckland locked down until late November at best, tens of thousands of Aucklanders are missing out on swimming lessons and training due to the inflexibility of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions," says Mark Bone, Founder and CEO of SwimTastic.

According to the World Health Organisation swimming in a well-maintained, properly chlorinated pool is safe, and according to the CDC there is no evidence that COVID-19 can spread to humans through water in pools. The CDC states that 'the proper operation and maintenance (including disinfection with chlorine and bromine) at these facilities should inactivate the virus in the water.

"The majority of Auckland's indoor pools have excellent ventilation and water filtration systems alongside having the ability to follow and operate by putting in place appropriate prevention and control measures," said Mr Bone.

As an example, SwimTastic's purpose-built facility on Merton Road, St Johns operates state-of-the-art filtration systems that disinfect pool water through both UV light rays as well as being chlorinated. This means the pools can operate at lower chlorination levels that kills the germs without overloading the amount of chlorine in the pool, which at high levels can also irritate swimmers.

To allow swimming pools to re-open, SwimTastic supports measures such as physically distancing where appropriate, avoiding unnecessary contact and use of shared spaces such as changing rooms, limiting staff interaction with fellow staff and patrons, limiting occupancy within the facility and asking those that do not need to be there to simply drop the children off and return and mask wearing for visitors (parents and guardians) are all effective control and prevention methods for containing the virus spread to can enable us to operate swimming facilities' safely.

"We implore the Government to recognise that swimming pools are hubs for local communities, helping people of all ages to lead healthier, happier lives. They are also places

where hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders learn a skill that could one day save their life – or someone else’s,” said Mr Bone.

“With no evidence to suggest that the virus can be transmitted through swimming pool water we believe Auckland’s swimming pools should be allowed to open now, especially for adults. We should be able to open up for booked time-slots for swimming.”

“If Singapore and many other countries can open their swimming pools to pre-bookings, why can’t those in Auckland?” Mr Bone asked.

SwimTastic has looked around the world to see how other countries have managed opening swimming pools. They found that:

UK

- Swimming pools re-opened 12 April 2021

Denmark

- Swimming pools are open, no masks are required. A valid negative COVID-19 test is required to visit some facilities.

Singapore

- From 27 September Singapore’s Safe Management measures allow for up to 2 individuals (including instructor/coach) to exercise in a group. Specific swimming timings are being allocated for different segments and groups. Members of the public are to follow the allocated timings strictly and bookings are required via the ActiveSG app or website.
- Bookings for slots are open 3 days ahead of the usage date, with the duration for each swim slot is 60 minutes.

Vancouver, Canada

- The majority of Aquafit spaces are open for pre-registration, with swimming lessons offered for pre-school, children, and youth age groups.

New South Wales, Australia

- Indoor swimming pools can open for swimming classes, lap swimming, squad training and rehabilitation activities. Fully vaccinated adults aged 16 years and over as well as unvaccinated children under 16 years can participate. From 1 December 2021 all indoor swimming pools will reopen for all purposes.

Melbourne, Australia

- Swimming pools are open outdoors only, and only for fully vaccinated patrons only. Patron and density limits apply. Evidence of being fully vaccinated to enter is required. Swimming pools can continue to provide hydrotherapy for essential medical care (such as hydrotherapy) in indoor and outdoor settings regardless of the vaccination status of patrons. Changing rooms are closed.

Wellington, New Zealand

- Recommended that people come to the pool 'beach ready' change and shower at home if possible. A maximum number of people allowed at any one time. For lane swimming 4 people per lane limit. At the Huia Pool aqua jogging is limited to 10 people per double lane.

[ENDS]

Contact

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Notes for Editors:

By following and operating with the appropriate prevention/control measures in place, including by not limited to:

- physically distancing where appropriate, avoiding unnecessary contact and use of shared spaces such as changing rooms.
- limiting staff interaction with fellow staff and patrons.
- limiting occupancy within the facility and asking those that do not need to be there to simply drop the children off and return and mask wearing for visitors (parents and guardians).

These are all effective control and prevention methods for containing the virus spread to enable us to operating our swimming facility safely.

Mask wearing by our instructors and children in classes is not required and this is following the advice of the New Zealand Government (Covid-19 NZ, 2021)

Contract tracing methods is also compulsory, and visitors will need to sign in, using the Covid-19 tracer app or our single sign-in slips when entering the facility. We also have contact methods in place for the children swimming, through our class rolls.

The advice from the Ministry of Health also supports swimming saying it is healthy and fun, and swimming pools are safe and healthy environments (NZ, Ministry of Health, 20)