**RE-OPENING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**A Proposal to DC Health and the District of Columbia for 6 Feet of Social Distancing at Gyms, Fitness Centers, and Health Clubs**

Reopening guidelines initially provided that gym members may lower their facemask when exercising while maintaining 10 feet of social distancing. VIDA Fitness made the business decision to require facemasks 100% of the time, even while exercising, prior to the government requirement as a necessary safety precaution. The 100% facemask requirement increases safety and most jurisdictions have allowed 6 feet of social distancing when facemasks are required.

We have all heard the talking point that “facemasks are not a substitute for social distancing.” While that is generally accepted, the questions we must ask are “How much social distancing is necessary?” and “What type of facemasks are most effective?” We posed these exact questions to our Medical Advisory Board of local MD’s with professional and clinical experience with infectious disease. Their evaluation was unanimous. ***6 Feet of social distancing is safe and effective while exercising if proper facemasks are worn by all gym members***. Heavy breathing induced by exercised does not require additional social distancing when a proper facemask is worn.

We need 6 feet of social distancing to allow proper, yet safe, access to our equipment and classes. We only have 35% of our pre-COVID customer base remaining and we are at risk of further losses if we cannot make our equipment and classes more accessible. This social distancing adjustment will help us keep what we have and bring more customers back. As such, we ask DC Health and the District of Columbia to create a waiver process where gyms can apply for 6 feet of social distancing, similar to what you have done with other businesses in the District.

**Specific Guidelines**

* Facemasks: all gym members and employees must wear a proper facemask at all times.
* Approved Facemasks:
  + Cloth facemasks with 2 or more layers of washable, breathable fabric
  + Disposable, 3-ply facemasks
  + Surgical masks
* Unapproved Facemasks:
  + Bandanas – they do not effectively contain respiratory droplets
  + Breathing Valve – they allow virus particles to escape through the valve opening
  + Neck Gaiters – effectiveness is unknown at this time, but may produce additional particles
* Secure Fit: facemasks must fit securely and fully cover the individual’s nose and mouth
* Notice and Enforcement: gyms must place signage at their entrance outlining facemask requirements and have staff individually review each gym members facemask for compliance.