

Are fitness clubs safe?



Fitness clubs re-opened 7 weeks ago. As of 6 June, club members resumed their workouts, returning after a roughly 3-months break. Even though the clubs require following strict sanitary guidelines, there is no shortage of eager fitness enthusiasts. Does this mean that we can feel safe at the gym?

A doctor's opinion leaves no room for doubt:

'I think gyms are now safer than grocery stores or barber shops. They are frequented by physically active people who follow a healthy lifestyle and therefore their risk of infection is low. Good fitness clubs have modern ventilation systems, are cleaned regularly and their equipment is disinfected. Naturally, a club MUST be prepared and its owners should make sure of that,' says Doctor Michał Chudzik, general practitioner, cardiologist, specialist in sports electrocardiology and expert in anti-aging medicine and healthy lifestyle medicine, who works with the Medcover chain.

And what do the club members think of this? According to a survey* carried out among members of CityFit – the largest chain of round the clock fitness clubs in Poland, a whopping 92% of them feel safe while working out at their club, with 94% willing to recommend training there to their friends. The club members gave 5 star ('super') reviews to all facets of the sanitary regime and safe training rules: cleanliness, solutions introduced to ensure a safe training environment, communication and information on safe training rules, as well as the demeanour and approach of the club staff members.

'In preparing to re-open our 22 clubs we made training safety our priority. As we were planning our actions, we relied on the experience of Scandinavian and Chinese markets, where fitness clubs re-opened sooner than in Poland. This allowed us to implement solutions that have already been tested and steer clear of mistakes that were made there. The survey among club members was meant to confirm whether we did a good job with this task and whether our customers consider CityFit a safe place to work out,' says Łukasz Gądek, member of the chain's Management Board.



So what solutions have been implemented? First, there are those related to maintaining social distancing. The chain follows the government's guidelines on a maximum number of people working out at a time: currently, 1 person per 7 sqm of club space. The system constantly monitors the number of trainees, and since the clubs are some of the largest facilities on the market, the limits introduced should not make it overly difficult to find space to train. The number of participants in fitness classes has been limited though. You can register via the CityFit app to book your spot in advance. To help customers maintain the recommended distance (2 meters), some changes have also been made to the layout of training equipment. All clubs have been disinfected and equipped with the necessary hand sanitizers and disinfectants for the equipment. Club members are required to wipe off the equipment once they are done using it, and place a towel in places where their body comes in contact with the machine. Cleanliness is also ensured by the cleaning service – paying particular attention to points of contact (grips, handles). The air handling units and the HVAC system have also been adapted to the current requirements, maximizing the amount of fresh air collected from outside. To ensure safe entry to and exit from the club, the chain recommends using QR codes generated in the CityFit app. This allows customers to enter in a way that entails no service and is contactless at any time of day or night (no need to pass cards or collect keys at the reception desk). The chain has also made some changes to work practices, introducing such solutions as rotating shifts, new rules for entering and staying in break rooms or body temperature checks before shifts. Much attention has been paid to education and information. Detailed information on how to train safely is posted on the website www.cityfit.pl/bezpieczeństwo and the re-opening was immediately followed by an information campaign for club members.

When making a decision to return or start on our fitness journey, we should definitely pay attention to our health. However, if there are no major contraindications, there is a lot to gain. And not all of it has to do with getting in shape or improving our physique, but also with our health and resilience.

'Physical activity definitely slows down the aging process of our immune system. I am of the opinion that for each aging person – and this process unfortunately begins around the age of 25–28 – being physically active is THE MOST IMPORTANT factor to reduce the risk of infection. A healthy young immune system is much better equipped to handle diseases. That is why very young people and children do not become sick with COVID-19,' explains Doctor Chudzik.

***An online survey carried out in July this year with 2,217 CityFit customers.**



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CityFit is a Polish chain of innovative fitness clubs that are open 24/7. The chain's mission is to offer its club members the full comfort of exercising at an attractive price and without requiring them to sign long-term contracts. For more information, visit www.cityfit.pl