

FAQs

COVID SAFETY

How safe is it to go swimming in the current (Covid) situation?

To quote the Swim England website;

Until a vaccination or treatment for Covid-19 is found there are always risks when undertaking any activity. Swimming pools are well managed spaces with numerous risk control measures in place. The World Health Organisation states that: "Conventional, centralised water treatment methods that utilise filtration and disinfection should inactivate the Covid-19 virus. Other human coronaviruses have been shown to be sensitive to chlorination and disinfection with ultraviolet (UV) light."

The Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group (PWTAG) state: "The available evidence shows that the physical effect of the pool water and an appropriate relationship between free chlorine and pH value should inactivate the virus within 15-30 seconds. The dilution of virus in the pool water volume will also reduce the risk of exposure and transmission."

Furthermore, Swim England's Returning to Pools guidance and PWTAG technical notes have been produced in consultation with Public Health England, supporting the view that coronavirus would be inactivated at the levels of chlorine used in swimming pools.

This advice relates the effect of chlorine in the water, and as it states, an element of risk will always be present in any activity, but the procedures outlined below that relate to social distancing, for example, which are based on best practices outlined by the national Swim England body will help to minimise the risk for everyone in the water or on poolside.

How will social distancing be maintained on poolside, e.g. when changing?

Swimmers will each have a chair where they can leave their clothes and valuables. These will be spaced at regular distances around the pool. Once ready to swim, swimmers will be called forward by their coach, one lane at a time and they will assemble (at 2 metre intervals) at the bottom end of the pool, nearest the changing rooms (Lanes 1 and 3), or at the top end of the pool (Lanes 2 and 4). In this way, we aim to keep swimmers as widely spaced around the pool as possible before (and after) they enter the water.

How will social distancing be maintained in the water?

There will be a maximum of 8 swimmers in each lane. Lanes 2 and 4 will finish their sets at the deep end of the pool, furthest from the changing rooms, while lanes 1 and 3 will finish their sets at the shallow end, nearest the changing rooms (Lane 1 is nearest the patio and Lane 4 is nearest the gym). Coaches will explain where swimmers should stop once a set is complete. Swimmers will be in their respective lanes because they are of similar speed and ability, This should allow swimmers, as far as possible to maintain a distance from the swimmer in front or behind during the set. No overtaking is allowed, so coaches may rearrange the order of swimmers in a particular lane as they see fit, to try to ensure that no one is held up unduly or struggling to keep pace with the person in front. It should therefore still be possible to train much as before. NB. All lanes will swim clockwise. This ensures that where one swimmer passes another in the next lane, at the closest point, they will be travelling in opposite directions, and thus that proximity will be of the shortest possible duration.

What if a swimmer is not feeling well before a session?

If a swimmer is feeling any of the symptoms usually associated with Covid 19, i.e. a high temperature, a new, continuous cough or a loss of sense of taste or smell, they must not come to training under any circumstances, in line with the Return to Training declaration. They must also not return to training for a period of at least 14 days and follow government guidance to self-isolate. This also applies if any member of the swimmer's household or the person who potentially would bring the swimmer to the pool and/or collect them, has suspected Covid symptoms.

Will the club operate a bubble system?

As far as possible, we will try to ensure that any swimmers, coaches and committee attend one session only each week, with the exception of the Covid Lead and/or Covid Liaisons, who is expected to attend most sessions initially. It may be necessary, on occasion, for a coach to stand in for another, due to work commitments etc., but we will try to keep this to a minimum. Each lane, within a session, will be treated as a bubble, as per Swim England guidelines.

What if there is a suspected case of Covid 19 affecting a swimmer during one of the sessions?

Following the recommendations of Swim England, if a swimmer starts to feel unwell during a session they will be asked to remove themselves from that session and return home as soon as this is practical. There is a room at the Blue Pool set aside for the isolation of anyone in such circumstances while they wait for pick-up. They should then book a test, and stay away from club sessions until the results of that test are known. Other swimmers in that person's lane can continue to swim in the meantime. If the test for that person comes back positive, then they should inform the club as soon as possible. That person's entire lane will have to self-isolate for 14 days. If the test is negative, then the swimmer can return.

What if a swimmer self-isolates / gets a test result – how does that affect other swimmers?

- *If a swimmer is told by Test and Trace to self-isolate, or a member of their household is told to do so, there is no immediate implication for other swimmers in that swimmer's lane/bubble.*
- *If the swimmer takes a Covid test and the result is negative or inconclusive, this also has no implication for the other swimmers in that swimmer's bubble.*
- *If the swimmer takes a Covid test and the result is positive, then the swimmer (/parents/guardians) should inform the club, as the rest of that swimmer's lane/bubble will then have to self-isolate for 14 days.*

POOL AVAILABILITY

Why is there no Monday session?

The Blue Pool is currently not allowed to operate according to their pre-Covid timetable, so opening hours have been shortened. At the same time, up to half an hour is necessary between activities for staff to sanitize all areas before the next activity. Therefore, in order to fit all users in as much as possible, activities are limited to fewer, shorter timeslots than before. If/when the Covid situation improves, we should be able to swim in more and longer sessions

Why can we only swim for 1 hour / 45 minutes?

See above

Can we swim in more than one session per week?

Unfortunately, because the number of swimmers is limited in each session, and also because we are treating each session as far as possible, as a separate bubble, swimmers will only be allowed to swim in one session per week for now.

Is there a maximum number of swimmers per session?

The maximum we are permitted is 32, i.e. 4 lanes of 8 swimmers each. As before, swimmers will be allocated a lane in advance according to speed and ability in order to avoid congestion / bunching up. Overtaking will NOT be permitted within each lane and coaches will advise about spacing both while swimming and on reaching the end of a set / stopping for a rest and coaching at the end of the lane

Why have I been allocated a specific session on Thursday / Saturday?

To try to ensure a swim for as many members as possible, we will be asking which sessions swimmers are able to swim in, and, if more than one, which is their first preference. It will not always be possible to allocate a swimmer to their first choice of session, although we will do our best.

Will it be possible to move to a different session once swimming has restarted?

As each lane within each session will constitute a bubble, it will not be possible to move between sessions, without a period of self-isolation from the club. Even then, it will only be possible if there is space, i.e. if there are less than 32 swimmers allocated to that session. As such, it is advisable to stay in the session originally allocated.

What about casual members / university members?

In the initial week or so, we will be restricting swimming to regular swimmers. However, once we have fully and successfully worked out the safest and best way to operate, we should be able to accept casual/university swimmers, provided there is space (since we have a maximum of 32 for any one session). Once we have worked out the appropriate procedures, we will publish an update to include these swimmers, and how they will be able to swim.

When will Teach To Swim start up again?

It is not possible yet to give a specific date. However, we hope that before long, more sessions will become available, and that it will become possible to operate Teach To Swim much as before. As soon as the Blue Pool allow us to operate TTS sessions, and have a space in their timetable, we will work towards restarting as soon as possible.

KIT / LOST PROPERTY

Are there different rules for kit compared to pre-Covid?

Yes – a swimmer's kit must be labelled with their name or some other unique identifier. Water bottles in particular are often of the same brand and colour, so it is vital to ensure you are not going home with someone else's kit, for reasons of bio-security.

What if I lose my goggles / water bottle etc.? / What are the rules for Lost Property?

Due to the danger from contaminated surfaces, Lost Property will only be kept until the end of the day on which that property is found. After this IT WILL BE DISPOSED OF. So check you have all your kit before you leave the pool.

What about shared (club owned) equipment, such as floats?

If possible, we recommend that swimmers bring along their own floats (clearly identified, e.g. with indelible marker), fins etc. The club can provide shared equipment as before, but this must be used by one swimmer only for the duration of the session. At the end of the session, such equipment will be submerged in the pool water. To quote the FAQ's on the Swim England website, "The Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group (PWTAG) state: "The available evidence shows that the physical effect of the pool water and an appropriate relationship between free chlorine and pH value should inactivate the virus within 15-30 seconds. The dilution of virus in the pool water volume will also reduce the risk of exposure and transmission."

HOW THE SESSIONS WILL RUN

Can we use the changing rooms?

Swimmers will NOT be permitted to use the changing rooms or lockers. This means that swimmers must arrive 'Beach Ready', i.e. with swimming costume worn beneath outside clothes, so that the swimmer can remove outer layers on poolside and thus be ready to enter the water. At the end of the session, swimmers will dry off, as best they can, and put on outer layers, again on poolside. It is not permissible to 'change under a towel' etc.

NB. While the use of changing rooms and showers is not permitted, toilets CAN be used as required.

Where should we and our parents/guardians go when we arrive at the Blue Pool?

Swimmers should not enter the Blue Pool via the normal entrance. Instead they should walk straight past reception, through the black gate and onto the big patio, where they must maintain a 2 metre distance from any others who are queuing to get in. Coaches / other adults will be on hand to direct swimmers and ensure social distancing. Swimmers in Lanes 1 and 3 will enter the pool via the door near the deep end of the pool (at the far end of the patio). Swimmers in Lanes 2 and 4 will enter the pool via the door at the shallow end (nearest reception).

Any parents or guardians who wish to accompany their children onto the patio may do so, but they cannot enter the pool area, unless their child is under the age of 10. These parents / guardians must exit the complex via the blue door in the patio wall nearest to Melksham House, i.e. at the far end of the patio.

Where do we sign in?

It is now a legal requirement for the club to keep an accurate record of attendance for 21 days and to pass this record to the relevant authorities if asked, for the purposes of Track and Trace. As such, the register will be taken outside the appropriate door (see above) as the swimmer enters. The swimmer will be reminded which lane they will be swimming in, where on poolside to go to get changed, and which end they should then move towards when called to do so by their coach.

It is therefore more important than ever to be sure that you have been signed in – please do not get changed until this has happened. Any parents / guardians who are permitted on poolside must also have their details recorded on the sign-in sheet. We would encourage those carrying smartphones, who are using the new Contact Tracing App (launched 24/09/20) to scan the QR code on display by each of the patio entrance doors.

Can parents / guardians sit on poolside to watch?

In order to limit the numbers on poolside, it will not be possible for parents of swimmers aged 10 and over to watch their children as they did pre-Covid, except in exceptional circumstances. Clearly, the fewer people we have on poolside, the lower the risk of virus spread. For any swimmers aged under 10, parents / guardians must remain on poolside, wearing a mask at all times, sitting at one of the chairs along the edge. This must be the same chair where the swimmer leaves their outer clothing, kit bag etc. It is not permitted to move the chairs from their pre-arranged positions, as these chairs are spaced at specific intervals. Any parent/guardian on the patio side chairs must ensure that there is at least one non-occupied chair between them and another parent/guardian.

How long is the changeover between sessions?

15 minutes are allowed between the first and second sessions on the Thursday evening, and between our Saturday morning session, and the non-MASC session which follows it. In this time, swimmers from the first session must have exited the pool and patio area, as swimmers in the next session will not be allowed to enter the pool area until the former have all done so. The time is also needed to swill the complete pool edge with chlorinated water and to spray and wipe down every one of the chairs used for changing, along with door handles etc., so changing must be done quickly.

Where do we exit the pool?

Once they have dried off as far as possible and put on 'outside clothing' over their costumes, swimmers should exit the pool area as follows;

- Those changing on the patio side (Lanes 1 and 3) should exit via the door at the deep end of the pool, which leads directly onto the patio, furthest from the changing rooms*
- Those changing on the gym side (Lanes 2 and 4) should exit via the 'blacked out' door at the deep end of the pool, and turn left, to walk along the back of the top end of the pool and then emerge onto the patio*

Where do we go to get picked up when the swim session finishes?

All swimmers should then proceed to the blue wooden door in the end wall of the patio, on the side nearest to Melksham House, i.e. on the opposite side of the patio to the black gate and the main entrance. Parents / guardians should await their arrival on the OTHER SIDE of this door (socially distanced, of course). Unfortunately, there is little shelter or lighting in this area, so we would advise parents/guardians to bring umbrellas and torches.

Who will be on-site to ensure Covid 19 procedures are being followed?

The lifeguards have had specific Covid training, and have been overseeing public swims for some time. As always, any instructions they may give to swimmers should be followed to the letter. Club coaches have also thought hard about how best to train under Covid restrictions, with swimmers' safety top of mind at all times, so it's more important than ever to listen to their instructions carefully, as many of the usual systems will not apply and new rules must be followed. The club have appointed Andy Clayton as Covid Lead, who is the main point of contact for all Covid specific issues. He, or a nominated Covid Liaison will be on site for all sessions a) to answer any major queries, b) to keep an eye on how well the systems we have set up are operating, c) to amend them if required, and d) to keep the committee (and parents/guardians as necessary) up to speed with how things are running.

PAYMENTS

Should we change our Standing Orders?

We will issue separate notes about this closer to the time of restarting sessions.

Who should I speak to if I have any specifically Covid 19 related concerns?

Andy Clayton (treasurer@melkshamsworfish.org.uk) is the club's Covid Lead and liaison with the management of the Blue Pool. I am ultimately responsible for the club's Covid 19 procedures. I, and/or nominated deputies will be on poolside for the duration of most sessions and I'll try to make myself available on the patio before the session start, and at the pick up point outside the patio wall at the end of sessions as much as possible. Please feel free to email me, however, if there is anything Covid-related, to do with MASC, that you would like to work through.