

British Columbia

Kelowna golf courses reopen with new protocols but health officials say it's not a great idea

Interior Health says people should not be associating with anyone outside their immediate household

[Brady Strachan](#) · CBC News · Posted: Apr 15, 2020 6:42 PM PT | Last Updated: April 15



Golfers are expected to keep physical distance from one another while on the links in order to try to prevent spread of the COVID-19 virus. (Brady Strachan / CBC)

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Several golf courses in the Kelowna, B.C. area have opened this week with a set of new protocols aimed at keeping physical distance among golfers and staff and stopping the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

While much of the actual playing of golf will remain the same, many of the social norms and pre-and-post-game rituals are vastly different for golfers, according to Ian Robertson a manager at Kelowna Springs Golf Club.

"It's really quite exhaustive the steps we have taken to keep golfers and staff safe," he said.

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"We have reduced capacity by about 25 per cent by just spreading out the tee times that much more and there is an abundance of signage everywhere."



Golfers are welcomed by a large sign at the Kelowna Springs Golf Club informing them of the new protocols in place to help stop the spread of COVID-19 (Brady Strachan / CBC)

Other measures include closing clubhouse restaurants, putting greens and hitting nets, asking golfers to arrive no earlier than 20 minutes before their tee time, limiting the number of people who can be in the pro shop at the same time and asking golfers to leave immediately after their game finishes.

"No, it is really just a matter of making sure our customers and our guests respect those protocols," Robertson said.

"I think that golf is just a wonderful opportunity for people to get outside, be safe and spread out on 100 plus acre properties."

Shannon Lake Golf Club in West Kelowna also opened on Wednesday.

During the past few weeks, Central Okanagan golf clubs consulted with one another to come up with the set of best practices for operating during the pandemic, according to general manager John Jacoby.

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"We have been in contact with Interior Health and our understanding is that you can proceed with your business if it is not essential, as long as it is safe and you can do social distancing and that all the requirements are met," he said.



Putting greens and hitting cages are closed as part of measures to prevent golfers from congregating at Kelowna Springs Golf Club. (Brady Strachan/CBC)

Jacoby said the Kelowna area courses consulted with other golf courses in the province which did not close during the pandemic.

"We believe strongly that giving people a recreation option to get outside and get some exercise is trying to be healthy as well and we believe that we can do that," said Jacoby.

Health authority advises against visiting golf courses

Interior Health Authority chief medical health officer Dr. Sue Pollock said she is aware golf courses are opening but she cautioned people against going to them.

"Right now, we are really encouraging people to certainly spend time outdoors with their immediate families —those in their household — and to stay closer to home to do that," she said.

"Try to do that through just walks in your neighbourhood or biking, rather than going to settings like golf courses."

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