

PRESS RELEASE

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How Fitness First plans to reopen its studios

*Comprehensive protective measures and hygiene rules for members and employees:
How Fitness First is preparing for the new normal.*

Frankfurt, May 8th, 2020. On May 6th, it was announced that fitness studios could reopen. Each federal state is responsible for deciding when and under which conditions this will happen. While the studios in large parts of the country will remain closed for the time being, operations in North Rhine-Westphalia will be able to resume on May 11th, in Hesse on May 15th and in Saxony and Lower Saxony most likely on May 18th and 25th respectively – with official conditions and measures being developed by the studios. “After weeks of uncertainty, we are happy to finally be able to open again. We are confident that all other federal states will follow with their decision to reopen by June at the latest,” says Martin Seibold, CEO of Fitness First and LifeFit Group. The fitness and health platform combines brands such as Fitness First, Smile X and Elbgym with more than 80 studios in Germany under one roof. “We have not been idle over the past few weeks, but have prepared the clubs and developed measures for their reopening,” adds Seibold.

Protective measures and hygiene rules for members and staff

Employees were extensively informed about the corona virus and trained on the precautions in the club. This way, they and their members are offered the greatest possible protection and responsible interaction with one another is ensured. However, when the first studios open their doors to members again next week, the training will not be the same as it was before they closed. In addition to the generally applicable rules of distance and hygiene, there will be no physical contact, changed equipment arrangements and restrictions on the number of members in each studio. Training times can be booked in advance via the website or an app: “The training offer will change overall. We would advise against intensive, sweat-inducing training sessions and have instructed our trainers accordingly”, explains Seibold. The infrastructure in the studio will also be different – showers, changing rooms, swimming pools and wellness areas will remain closed for the time being. Amongst many other measures, the complete concept also depends on the official requirements of each of the federal states.

Rush to fitness studios – a reality check

“Although gyms have been completely closed since mid-March and many members can hardly wait to start training again, we do not expect an excessive rush. Because of the access restrictions and the cautious behaviour of people in times of the corona crisis, this is very unlikely. While this makes it easier for us to comply with the protection and hygiene measures,

it also means that we and the entire industry will continue to have to deal with financial losses,” says Seibold. Since gyms have closed, they have not been able to recruit new members. Nevertheless, costs such as rent and equipment leasing continue to run. Almost 100 percent of the studios’ employees are currently on short-time work. Even though the clubs are now gradually reopening, not all employees will be able to return from short-time work immediately.

Grateful for the confidence of the members

“We are very happy and grateful that the majority of Fitness First members continue to remain loyal to us,” explains Seibold. The online courses offered via YouTube are very well received by members – on average, over 1,100 fitness fans take part in each of the 6-8 live courses broadcasted daily. The company also offers its members compensation packages – for example training vouchers, an upgrade to a higher club category or a full body analysis with the Tanita scale. Nevertheless, the financial effects are still clearly noticeable for the entire LifeFit Group. At Smile X, a chain of fitness studios in the high-value-low-price segment in the Saar-Palatinate region, and Elbgym, the performance fitness provider from Hamburg, which like Fitness First belong to the LifeFit Group, the situation is similar – as it is with many other fitness providers. “The entire fitness industry, which previously boomed, has collapsed and now has to manoeuvre its way out of the crisis step by step – a great challenge for all of us,” says Seibold.

A look into the future

The current crisis has accelerated the trend towards digitalization in the fitness industry. Online courses are in demand like never before. “But of course we are also seeing that our members want to train in fitness studios again, to strengthen their immune system and defences especially now. After all, the positive aspects of sport and exercise are undisputed and scientifically proven,” says Seibold. Sport increases the quality of life, improves the mood and prevents everyday health issues such as back problems, diabetes, cardiovascular running disorders and obesity. But online offers cannot compensate for the trainer and the training on site in the gym in the long run. At a certain point, digital training reaches its limits. For example, many users do not have the right equipment at home –training possibilities in the living room are limited. “We will continue to expand our online services, which we had already strengthened before the crisis, in the future. Nevertheless, we firmly believe that people will continue to visit fitness studios. Probably a little cautiously at first, but we are positive that there will be a rush for the clubs’ training offers again,” says Seibold with a look into the future. “It is essential that the government will allow us to gradually reopen the training area for groups as well as the shower and wellness areas in the foreseeable future - of course, always in compliance with distance and hygiene rules and a suitable concept. The health of our members and employees is our top priority. Furthermore, the fitness industry, like many other industries, requires state subsidies in the area of rent – otherwise a major bankruptcy quake in the industry cannot be stopped, possibly with serious medium-term consequences for our health system”.

ABOUT FITNESS FIRST

Fitness First is a fitness service provider in the premium segment and part of the LifeFit Group. The company offers a motivating fitness experience with innovative training concepts, relaxation in the form of wellness facilities and more than 20 swimming pools. As a pioneer of functional training, Fitness First is always up to date in this growing trend and has a designated freestyle zone in all clubs.

ABOUT THE LIFEFIT GROUP

The LifeFit Group is a leading fitness and health platform in Germany, combining several fitness brands from the boutique, high value low price and premium segments under one roof. The Group strives to inspire and support its customers to improve their lives through personal, entertaining and targeted health and fitness experiences. In addition to Fitness First, other brands are also part of the group: Elbgym, the exclusive Hamburg-based performance fitness provider, stands for hard training and a strong community, while Smile X positions itself in the premium low-price segment with a special training surface concept for a wide range of customers. The boutique fitness concepts of Barry's Bootcamp, the pioneer of high-intensity interval training indoors, and The Gym Society, the innovative, compact studio concept from the Netherlands, which aims to reach 80% of health-conscious people who have not yet found the right concept for themselves, and now the brands Club Pilates and Pure Barre from Xponential Fitness, round off the LifeFit Group's diverse portfolio. More information about the LifeFit Group at www.lifefit-group.com.

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