

# Coronavirus Update: Consumers Struggle With Gym Memberships, Recurring Fees Amid Shutdown

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**NEW YORK (CBSNewYork)** – Many businesses are closed amid the coronavirus shutdown, but some are still charging subscription and membership fees.

CBS2's Nina Kapur spoke with a legal expert to see if there's any recourse.

West Village resident Jon Barr been a member of the New York Sports Club for nine years. He says he was frustrated when the club shut down without providing any information to members about their monthly charges.

"After they closed there was no way to reach anybody. I finally somehow got this generic email, and I think I'm going to be on the hook for a \$40-a-month payment April 1st," Barr said.

Other gyms have been more transparent.

Planet Fitness told its members, "We have proactively frozen all memberships on your behalf." LA Fitness said it would suspend billing starting April 1.

But many members are still confused: If you've already been charged for March, can you get your money back?

"I would recommend going directly to the gym, explaining the financial hardship and asking that they be let out of their membership," said attorney Adam Gana.

Clothing subscriptions like Rent the Runway and Stitch Fix can continue to operate, but are extending return windows and allowing cancellations at any time.

Other consumers tell CBS2 they are still being charged for other services, including yoga and spa memberships. The spa Heyday is allowing members to use March credits through the end of the year or request a refund.

"I strongly suggest those that want to get out of their contracts to immediately send letters to their membership by email, explain that they can't come in cancel their memberships and explain to them that they want their memberships canceled," Gana said.

Gana says contracts are pretty set in stone and you'll want a paper trail proving your cancellation request.

In the meantime, Barr plans to take his finances into his own hands.

"I think the next step is going to be to contact my credit card company and to tell them to stop the recurring charges," he said.

Gana says that should be used as a last resort and suggests going to the company first. He also advises revisiting your membership or subscription contract, as it may have an out if the service is not accessible.

We've also learned there is now a class action lawsuit against the New York Sports Club, alleging the club is defrauding members.

CBS2 reached out to New York Sports Club multiple times, but they are not responding.