

# Plan for Return to Clinical Practice

The goal of this plan is to reduce the risk of exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19 for both the patient and the practitioner within the clinical setting. All therapists and patients must commit to these procedures in order to resume Registered Massage Therapy Services.

*“Coronavirus is transmitted via liquid droplets when a person coughs or sneezes. The virus can enter through these droplets through the eyes, nose or throat if you are in close contact.*

*The virus is not known to be airborne (e.g. transmitted through the particles floating in the air) and it is not something that comes in through the skin.*

*It can be spread by touch if a person has used their hands to cover their mouth or nose when they cough. That’s why we recommend you cough or sneeze into your arm and wash your hands regularly.”*

Source: <http://www.bccds.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/about-covid-19/how-it-spreads>

The overall aim of these protocols is to reduce the risk of viral transmission and create a low-risk environment for both the patient and the therapist.

## Characteristics of Return to Practice for RMT’s:

- Ongoing assessment for signs/symptoms of COVID-19 related illness
- Physical distancing for all non-treatment interactions
- Hand hygiene and avoidance of face touching
- Enhanced cleaning protocols
- Appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Professional obligations related to Informed Consent and Liability Insurance

## ASSESSMENT FOR SIGNS/SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19

Pre-Screening – Prior to arrival:

- Patients will be informed about the new procedures at the time of booking. A notice will be placed on the website, and the online booking software will send them a copy of these protocols. The clinic Facebook page and voicemail will also communicate this information
- Patients will be required to complete a COVID-19 pre-screening form when they receive their appointment reminder. There will be a link for them to click on and once they submit the form, the therapist will be notified
  - This will be necessary prior to every treatment
- The therapist will also phone the patient one day before their booked appointment to confirm that they are not experiencing any signs or symptoms of COVID-19
- The therapist will use the BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment tool daily and will cancel all appointments if they experience any symptoms
  - This tool can be found at: <https://bc.thrive.health/covid19/en>
- Symptoms of COVID-19 include:
  - Fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, loss of sense of smell

- If a patient is experiencing any of these symptoms and has not been tested, they will be advised to call 8-1-1
- Patients must also confirm that they have not been in contact with anyone displaying illness, or signs and symptoms of COVID-19 within 14 days prior to their treatment and that they have not traveled outside of BC within the last 14 days.
- Patients with higher risk profiles and/or weakened immune systems, should perhaps consider alternatives for care and postpone massage therapy treatment
- Patients will **NOT** be charged a late cancellation fee if they cancel due to a COVID-19 related illness

#### Screening Upon Arrival:

- Upon arrival, the patient and the therapist must confirm they are not experiencing any signs or symptoms of COVID-19
- The patient will be required to sign a COVID-19 specific consent form acknowledging that although the therapist is following a protocol to reduce the risk of viral transmission, that risk cannot be reduced to zero.
- For massage therapy treatment to commence, the patient and the therapist must both agree that the therapeutic benefits of massage therapy outweigh any potential consequence of treatment, including the possibility of viral transmission
- Masks must always be worn within the clinic space. The patient will be asked to bring their own mask, however if they arrive without one, a single-use mask will be provided. Therapists will also be wearing a mask
- The treatment will be cancelled immediately if the patient does not meet the pre-screening criteria upon physical presentation at the clinic

## PHYSICAL DISTANCING

#### Entry / Waiting area:

- The therapist and the patient must maintain 2 meters (6 feet) of distance in the clinic areas outside the treatment room
- Patients must arrive unaccompanied unless the patient is a minor who requires a parent/guardian, or needs assistance
- Previously scheduled appointment times will need to be changed/rescheduled in order to allow for staggered start times. This reduces the potential for patients to be crossing paths and gives the therapist more time between appointments for enhanced cleaning
- Patients are asked to wait in their vehicles until the therapist comes to greet them at the front door of the building. This will occur a few minutes before the scheduled appointment time
- If you must park further away, the therapist will either call or text to let you know they are ready
- Please do not enter the building on your own
- The door to the building will be opened by the therapist upon entry and exit. The door to the treatment room will also be opened and closed by the therapist. (A hand towel will be used)
- Please come in wearing your mask

#### Treatment Room:

- All fabric chairs and furnishings that cannot be sanitized will be removed
  - This includes candy dishes (Werther's will still be available upon request!)
- Patients will be asked to keep all personal belongings in a plastic bin, which will be sanitized between appointments
- It is not possible to maintain physical distancing during treatment however all precautions have been taken in order to reduce the risk of viral transmission

#### Washrooms:

- There will be a designated washroom for patient use
- Proper hand washing guidelines will be posted for reference
- There is a waste bin next to the washroom door so that a paper towel may be used to open the door and be discarded when exiting
- All washrooms will be sanitized as frequently as possible
- Patients are encouraged to use their own washrooms before arriving to the clinic

## **HAND HYGIENE / FACE TOUCHING**

- Patients are asked to use the hand sanitizer that is provided before and after treatment
- The therapist will wash their hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer between patients, before and after disinfecting surfaces, as well as before and after using PPE such as face masks or gloves
- Everyone is encouraged to avoid touching their face and if they need to cough or sneeze, they do so into their elbow. Tissues are also available for use
- After treatment, the patient can verbally indicate when they are ready, and the therapist will open the door
- A wireless Tap Point of Sale machine is available for card use. E-transfer is also acceptable
- Cash is not a preferred method of payment at this time
- Receipts will be emailed, not printed

## **ENHANCED CLEANING**

- Additional time has been scheduled between patients to allow for thorough cleaning of the treatment rooms
- All surfaces will be cleaned with a WHO approved disinfectant
- These surfaces include (but are not limited to):
  - Light switches, doorknobs, POS machines, Laptop/ iPad screens, electronic devices, phones, desk surfaces, chairs, stools
  - Treatment table, table levers, face cradle
  - Thermophores will not be used at this time, nor will any other hydrotherapy supply that cannot be sanitized
- All linens, including blankets and pillowcases, will be single use only and will be laundered using high heat and detergent between each use

- A HEPA Air Purifier has been placed in each of the treatment rooms and will be used between patients and/or during treatments

## **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

- The therapist will always wear a face mask in the clinic and will change masks between patients
- Gowns/aprons or shirts will also be changed between appointments
- The therapist will wear non-latex gloves if/when appropriate
- Hands will be washed with soap and water prior to putting on a mask and/or gloves and immediately after removing them
- Patients are required to bring their own mask and wear it while in the clinic setting

## **PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATIONS**

### Liability Insurance:

- The therapist carries professional liability insurance through Wilson M. Beck provided through the Registered Massage Therapist Association of BC

### If a patient alleges that they caught COVID-19 from the therapist:

- The therapist will immediately call public health at 8-1-1 and report the alleged transmission, providing both the RMT's name and contact information of the patient
- All massage therapy appointments will be cancelled, and the therapist will cease to provide service until public health has investigated and provided direction
- The therapist will immediately self-isolate and will inform his or her colleagues of transmission risk

### Asymptomatic Spreaders:

- Asymptomatic transmission of COVID-19 is an unavoidable risk of practice until there is either an effective treatment or an effective vaccine
- We have outlined protocols to help mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19 in the preceding documentation

### Informed Consent:

- In the current environment of COVID-19 risk, informed consent requires that the patient be informed and understands that:
  - Any massage therapy treatment involves some risk of COVID-19 transmission
  - The therapist is following a protocol to reduce or mitigate risk, but that risk cannot be reduced to zero;
  - The patient consents to treatment despite some risk; and
  - The RMT documents the patient's consent in advance at every treatment

