

COVID-19 Safety Plan

Version 5 (July 15/20)

1. Assessment and Prevention

- a. Patients will be informed about our COVID-19 Safety Plan and policies before or at the time of booking an appointment. Clear information will be included in all communication tools, including website, online booking system, and voicemail.
- b. Therapists will use the BC COVID-19 self-assessment tool daily (<https://bc.thrive.health>). Therapists will stay home and cancel appointments if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
- c. Therapists will:
 - i. Be conscious of the number of places they are going to before, during and after work and on their days off.
 - ii. Avoid non-essential trips within their community.
 - iii. Not gather in groups.
 - iv. Limit contact with those at high risk.
 - v. Go outside to exercise but stay close to home.
 - vi. Practice social distancing outside of their home to the best of their ability.
- d. Any international travel by therapists requires a 14-day quarantine upon returning to BC that will be strictly adhered to.
- e. If a therapist's close contact, a spouse, those they live with or their child becomes ill, the therapist will stay home and self-isolate with their family. They will only return to work when:
 - i. Their close contact has been tested and the results for COVID-19 come back negative and they are well.
 - ii. OR after self-isolating for 14 days and having no symptoms or fever develop.
 - iii. OR being cleared by a public health official.
- f. Patients shall:
 - i. Complete a thorough and honest pre-screening for symptoms of COVID-19, including information about recent travel.
 1. If the response to any of the screening questions is yes, the patient cannot receive a treatment. The patient will be instructed to call 811, go to <https://bc.thrive.health/> or to contact a physician for further guidance and advice.
 2. The patient can reschedule an appointment later after they are safe to be treated.
 - ii. Patients must confirm they have not travelled outside British Columbia in the previous 14 days.

- g. One day prior to a patient's appointment, the therapist will call or email to share our COVID-19 Safety Plan and ask them to complete the BC COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment.
 - i. For a patient's first appointment after June 1, 2020, or for higher-risk patients, the therapist will always attempt to make contact by phone first.
 - ii. For subsequent regular follow-up appointments, if the patient gives permission in advance, the therapist will email.
- h. For patients at greater risk, the therapist will call to discuss options such as taking additional precautions, finding alternatives for care, or postponing treatment. The therapist may provide massage therapy only when the patient and therapist agree that the benefits of care delivery outweigh the risk to the patient.
- i. Therapists have the discretion of providing treatment to health care workers (HCW) who may have been exposed to COVID-19. In making the determination to treat or not, we will consult the risk assessment tool (BCCDC's Exposures and return to work for health care workers).
 - i. If the HCW falls into the No Risk category, treatment can be provided.
 - ii. If the HCW falls into the Low Risk category, treatment can be provided, but they will be asked to wear a surgical mask.
- j. Signage will be placed at the front door requiring patients to not enter the clinic if they have any of the signs, symptoms or travel risks associated with COVID-19.
- k. At the beginning of the appointment, the therapist and patient shall run through self-assessment outcomes again to confirm safety and trust in moving forward. The therapist will cancel treatment if the patient doesn't meet the pre-screening criteria on physical presentation at the clinic.
- l. Our cancellation policy will be relaxed to ensure honesty and compliance with pre-screening questions. No charge will be levied for cancelled appointments due to patient illness, but we encourage patients to give us as much warning as possible. If a patient misses an appointment without notice or explanation, the standard clinic policy regarding no shows (50% fee) will apply.

2. Physical Distancing

- a. Patients will no longer be able to wait in the waiting room. There will be no magazines, snacks or water provided.
- b. Patients are asked to please arrive only at the time of their scheduled appointment.
 - i. **Between 8 am and 5:45 pm on weekdays, the front doors of the building are unlocked.** Patients are requested to wait at the end of the hallway on the 2nd floor near the elevators. Your therapist will open the clinic door and call you in when they're ready.
 - ii. **Before 8 am, after 5:45 pm, and on weekends, the front doors of the building will be locked.** Patients are requested to wait just outside the building. Your therapist will come down to get you when they're ready.
- c. Unless required for mobility or personal assistance, patients are asked to come into the clinic alone and not bring spouses or children.

- d. Special accommodations can be made for patients with mobility issues who may need assistance coming into the clinic or may need time to sit in the waiting area. These accommodations should be agreed to in advance via phone or email communication with the clinic.
- e. Patients are requested to please leave all non-essential items in their car or other safe space, to reduce possible surface transmission of COVID-19. We ask that all jewelry needing to be removed for effective massage therapy treatment be removed prior to entering the clinic.
- f. Therapists and patients must maintain 2 metres / 6 feet of distance in the waiting area as best as possible.
- g. It is obviously not possible to maintain physical distancing within the treatment room. Other precautions such as pre-screening, physical distancing elsewhere in the clinic, hand hygiene, and enhanced cleaning help reduce the risk of transmission, and enable treatment while minimizing risk of harm.
- h. Physical distancing protocols in hallways, elevators and bathrooms are the responsibility of the building landlord. Appropriate signage is in place.

3. Hand Hygiene

- a. Patients must wash hands immediately on arrival into the clinic, as soon as possible before touching doors or other surfaces. Hand cleaning must also be done by patients just before leaving the clinic.
- b. A hand washing station will be provided in the waiting room. Hand-washing protocols will be posted visibly in the reception area and at sinks. Patients are required to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, followed by thorough drying with the paper towels provided.
- c. Hand sanitizer will be available in all treatment rooms.
- d. RMTs have always been required to have high standards of hand hygiene. These already thorough standards have been enhanced. Specifically, therapists will wash hands before and after treatment, after touching their face or another surface in the clinic, and after cleaning surfaces in the clinic.
- e. Patients and therapists are requested to follow a 'no face touching' policy as best as they are able. Tissues should be used if an itch must be addressed. Tissues will be available for use in all areas of the clinic.
- f. Therapists may choose to use a headband or hand towel during treatment to avoid sweat from dripping into their eyes necessitating touch.
- g. Where possible the therapist will open and close doors to avoid the patient touching surfaces unnecessarily.
- h. Therapists will minimize the use of shared equipment in the clinic such as computers, phones, clipboards and office supplies. Therapists will use personal devices instead, where possible.
- i. Therapists will store their personal belongings in the dedicated storage areas in their treatment rooms.
- j. Bathroom keys will be sanitized after each use.

- k. Clinic paperwork can no longer be filled out in advance and brought into the clinic.
- l. During payment:
 - i. The preferred and safest method of payment is either e-transfer or point of sale machine using the tap feature (patients may want to check with their bank to ensure tap is enabled for payments \$100 or higher).
 - ii. Point of sale machine use without tap is less ideal but permitted. Hands will be washed and the POS machine cleaned between uses.
 - iii. Cash (exact change only) is discouraged but permitted. Both parties are required to wash hands afterwards.
 - iv. Emailed receipts are safer and preferred, but printed receipts can be provided upon request.

4. Cleaning Protocols

- a. All therapists have been thoroughly trained in COVID-19 sanitation protocols.
- b. All items that cannot be washed/wiped and sanitized have been removed from the clinic. All porous materials that cannot be laundered/changed after every use have been removed from the clinic.
- c. Every surface that the therapist or the patient touches will be cleaned and sanitized between every treatment (light switches, door handles, massage table, face cradle, chairs, etc).
- d. All high touch areas in the waiting room and office area of the clinic will be cleaned at least twice a day in compliance with CDC/Worksafe BC guidelines. A Cleaning Schedule will be posted on the wall in the waiting area with initials beside the time and date of cleaning. The surfaces cleaned will include:
 - i. door handles, light switches, cabinets, kitchen area
 - ii. soap dispenser, paper towel holder, faucet/taps, full sink area
 - iii. cell phones, phone, printer, POS machine, computer, keyboard, and mice
 - iv. chairs, stools, desk and table surfaces.
- e. As has always been standard practice in our clinic, all linens will be single-use only, then professionally laundered.

5. Personal Protective Equipment

- a. Mask use by patients and therapists is not mandatory. In instructions for massage therapy clinics on May 15, 2020 the BC Centre for Disease Control stated: "Personal Protective Equipment is the last and least effective of the infection prevention and exposure control measures and should only be considered after exploring all other measures. PPE is not effective as a stand-alone preventive measure."
- b. The therapist will address the question of mask use with a patient in advance via phone or email when possible, or at the time of the patient's arrival at the clinic. Patient's and therapist's personal boundaries and requests for a mask will always be respected.

- i.* If a patient requests that masks be worn during all or part of the appointment, both therapist and patient will wear a mask.
 - ii.* If the patient is unsure, the therapist and patient will discuss until the patient has come to a decision.
 - iii.* The therapist reserves the right to wear their own mask even if the patient feels it is not necessary.
- c.** Mask use by patients in the waiting area is encouraged to help reduce the possible spread of COVID-19. Patients are welcome to bring a clean mask with them and wear it into the waiting area when they arrive.
- d.** Disposable masks will be available in the clinic at the sanitation station in the waiting room. Hands must be washed prior to putting on a mask and after taking off and disposing of one.
- e.** Disposable masks will be discarded following use. If cloth masks are worn by the therapist, they will be laundered after each appointment and a new cloth mask worn for the next patient.
- f.** Mask use in the treatment room may be a problem for the patient while lying face-down with their face in the face cradle. It may be too uncomfortable or affect the patient's ability to breathe easily to wear a mask in this position. The patient always has the option to remove their mask for this portion of the treatment.

6. Informed Consent for Patients

- a.** Informed consent about the risk of COVID-19 transmission is required before treatment can begin. This includes ensuring that the patient understands:
 - i.* any massage therapy treatment involves some risk of COVID-19 transmission;
 - ii.* the therapist is following a protocol to reduce or mitigate risk, but that risk cannot be reduced to zero;
 - iii.* the patient consents to treatment despite some risk; and
 - iv.* the therapist has documented the patient's consent.
- b.** For the safety of all therapists and patients in the clinic, we require that each patient fill out and sign the COVID-19 Patient Intake Waiver before each treatment.
- c.** Patients should be aware that COVID-19 precautions may necessitate increased time for interview, assessment, paperwork and informed consent, and therefore slightly decrease the amount of time for treatment during their appointment.