

Absolute Therapy: Communicable Disease Plan

Purpose

This Plan was developed with the purpose of:

- Ensuring that Absolute Therapy can respond quickly and appropriately to new or seasonal communicable diseases, (especially during the latter period of the COVID-19 pandemic);
- Outlining actions to reduce the risk of exposure, both for clients and the practitioners, to communicable diseases; and,
- Maintaining compliance with WorkSafeBC and Public Health expectations of employers.

Communicable Disease Defined

A communicable disease is an illness caused by an infectious agent or its toxic product that can be transmitted in a workplace from one person to another. Examples of communicable diseases that may circulate in a workplace include COVID-10, norovirus, and seasonal influenza.

The level of risk of certain communicable diseases may increase from time to time or on a seasonal basis. This may occur at a local or regional level, or within a certain workplace.

Overview

The foundational elements of this communicable disease prevention include:

- A. Required ongoing assessment for signs of communicable diseases (and COVID-19 related illness) in both the client and the practitioner as advised by the Ministry of Health and the local Public Health Officer,
- B. Physical distancing in waiting rooms and other high traffic areas, as necessary
- C. Hand hygiene requirements
- D. Avoiding face touching
- E. Maintaining a clean work environment
- F. Proper ventilation
- G. Appropriate use of Public Health Measures (PHM), which refers to the use of non-surgical masks
- H. Meeting professional obligations, particularly related to informed consent and liability insurance
- I. Informed Consent

A. Assessment for Communicable Diseases: For Clients & Practitioners

Pre-Screening / Prior to Arrival

- Clients will be informed about their responsibilities at the time of booking. A notice will be placed on the online booking outlining their responsibility to complete a self-screening with regards to symptoms of communicable diseases.
- The practitioner will use the BC COVID-19 Assessment tool daily and commits to cancelling all appointments if symptoms appear.

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- Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other respiratory illnesses and seasonal allergies. An appointment must be cancelled immediately if either the client or the practitioner presents with any new and unexplained/unusual symptoms, even if they are mild, that may be signs of COVID-19 including:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Chills
 - Shortness of breath
 - Sore throat or pain with swallowing
 - Stuffy or runny nose, in combination with any other symptom(s)
 - Loss of sense of smell
 - Headache
 - Muscle aches
 - Fatigue
 - Loss of appetite
- As a part of the new patient intake forms, clients must commit to understanding that while we've taken all possible measures to minimize risk of viral transmission, the nature of the therapy means that physical distancing is not possible in the treatment room.
- In order for a treatment to commence the practitioner and client must agree that the therapeutic benefit of the treatment outweighs any potential consequence of treatment, including the possibility of viral transmission.
- Clients, Practitioners and Staff must confirm if they have been in contact with anyone displaying symptoms of COVID-19 within 14 days prior to their treatment. In these instances treatments may need to be cancelled/postponed.
- Clients with higher risk profiles and/or weakened immune systems should consider alternatives for care and postpone treatment.
- Clients and Practitioners who develop even mild illness or unusual symptoms should cancel booked appointments, even without notice.
- Practitioners will cancel any booked appointments if advised to do so by the Provincial Health Officer at any time.
- Clients will not be charged a late cancellation fee if they cancel due to illness.

Upon Arrival

- The practitioner will advise clients of their current Self-Assessment results upon their arrival at the clinic. Clients will be asked to share their own results.
- Upon arrival clients must confirm that they have no signs of COVID-19 as outlined here: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/about-covid-19/symptoms>

- As of March 18, 2022, by order of the Provincial Health Officer (PHO), masks are now optional in all public indoor settings and workplaces, however **mask use in healthcare settings is still required**. People who cannot put on or remove a mask on their own are exempt. Masks for children under the age of 2 is not recommended. Masks must be worn at all times within the clinic space. If the client has a mask, they are asked to bring it with them and wear it when they arrive. If the client does not have a mask, a single-use mask will be provided at a cost of \$1.00+GST, and they will be asked to wear it upon entering the clinic space.
- Clients must confirm that they have complied with any current travel restrictions.
- The treatment will be cancelled immediately if the client does not meet the pre-screening criteria upon physical presentation at the clinic.
- A client may be refused entry or service if they do not wear a mask.

Ongoing Assessment

- Absolute Therapy management will monitor and review communicable disease-related information issued by the regional medical health officer or the provincial health officer, as it relates to our workplace operation, industry and/or region on a monthly basis. This includes orders, guidance, notices and recommendations. Information will be reviewed routinely at:
 - Island Health: <https://www.islandhealth.ca/>
 - Office of the Provincial Health Officer: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer>
 - BC Center for Disease Control Reportable Disease Dashboard: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/data-reports/reportable-diseases-data-dashboard>
 - Health Canada Flu Watch Surveillance: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/flu-influenza/influenza-surveillance.html>
- Adaptations to this plan will be incorporated as required based on emerging Public Health information and input from the workplace stakeholders.
- For the foreseeable future, all staff and contracted workers will be consulted during Absolute Therapy's monthly meeting on the contents and implementation of this Plan.

B. Physical Distancing

Reception Area / Entry into Clinic Space

- Clients must arrive unaccompanied, with the exception of a guardian for minors, or care providers for clients with disabilities.
- All parties will maintain a space of 2 meters (6 feet) distance between each other in all clinic areas outside the treatment room.
- Clients will be instructed to arrive on time for their appointments and should be discouraged from lounging in the clinic reception area before or after the treatment.
- Client appointment times are staggered to minimize the potential of clients crossing paths. The clinic door will remain propped open during clinic hours.

Within the Clinic Common Areas (Kitchen & Laundry Room)

- Maximum of 6 practitioners in clinic premises at all times
- Practitioners should either remain in their treatment room or exit the clinic during any breaks
- Breaks between appointment times allow for cleaning of treatment rooms and common areas
- Masks are required in all shared work areas and areas where physical distancing cannot be maintained. This includes: elevators, kitchens, hallways, client counters and break rooms.

Restroom for Client Use

- The restroom has been equipped with proper handwashing guidelines as well as signage indicating that the client close the toilet lid before flushing.
- Soap and fresh paper towels for drying will be available at all times.
- A waste bin has been placed next to the restroom door so that clients may use a paper towel to open the door, and then discard of it before re-entering the clinic space.

C. Hand Hygiene

Reception Area / Entry into Clinic Space

- Immediately upon entering the 2nd floor of the building there will be signage indicating that the client should proceed directly to the washroom that has been dedicated as a handwashing station; the door to this washroom will be propped open at all times and proper handwashing guidelines posted.
- Upon entering the clinic space there will be hand sanitizer available.
- Practitioners and staff will wash hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds between clients (practitioners), before and after disinfecting spaces, before donning gloves and after taking gloves off, and before donning or doffing other PHM like facemasks after touching soiled laundry, tools, equipment and delivery items.
- Hand washing protocols will be posted visibly at all sinks.
- Payment occurs in the reception area. Clients will be encouraged to provide credit card details to be kept within our secure system so that payments can be processed automatically, however a Point of Sale system with Tap will also be available. The POS machine will be sanitized between each client.

In the Treatment Room

- The practitioner will open the door to the treatment room and allow the client to enter. The practitioner will open/close the door before, during and after the treatment as required – reducing the need for the client to touch the door.
 - Clients will be permitted to open the door for themselves after the treatment to let themselves out of the treatment room.
 - Tissue is available inside the treatment room that the clients may use as a barrier when opening the door.
 - Hand sanitizer is available within the treatment room; clients will be asked to wash or sanitize their hands after the treatment.
 - The door and doorknobs will be disinfected between each client.

D. Avoid Face Touching

- Tissue will be available throughout the clinic: in the reception area, treatment room and washroom in order that clients and the practitioner may use tissue to address an itch and/or touch the face for any other reason.
- The practitioner will wear a mask at all times, including when entering and exiting the clinic premises, and avoid touching and readjusting after it is in place.
- Clients are required to wear face masks that cover both the nose and mouth at all times within the clinic space.
- Intraoral TMJ treatments will not be conducted at this time, however extraoral treatments may be provided at the therapist's discretion. Masks must still be worn for the duration of the treatment and the therapist will avoid having their face in close proximity to the client's.

E. Maintaining A Clean Work Environment

- Time has been allocated between clients to allow for cleaning of the treatment room.
- Soiled surfaces will be cleaned followed by disinfection with a Canada Health disinfectant as listed here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>
- Practitioners and staff will be made aware of contact times for all disinfecting agents used and such information will be made available within the laundry area for reference.
- A cleaning check-list/ tracking schedule will be affixed in the laundry area and completed daily.
- Common areas will be cleaned and disinfected at minimum once a day, including the restroom. It is the responsibility of all practitioners and staff members contribute to the cleaning of common areas.
- A Cleaning and Disinfectant for Clinic Setting Poster will be on display in the reception area, client restroom and treatment room.
- High touch surfaces within common areas of the clinic will be cleaned and disinfected daily. High touch surfaces include (but are not limited to):
 - Light switches, door knobs, POS machine, electronic devices, telephone, table surfaces, chairs, stools, faucets, etc.
- All high touch surfaces within the treatment room will be cleaned and disinfected between clients, regardless of appearances. High touch surfaces include (but are not limited to):
 - The treatment table, table levers, face cradle, lotion bottles will be immediately after each treatment.
- No thermophores, table warmers or table covers will be used, without the use of a vinyl covering which can be cleaned and disinfected between each use.
- All linens, including blankets and pillow cases are single use only and will be laundered using detergent and bleach (for non-colored items) between each use.
- A clean single-use plastic bin has been placed in the treatment room to be used to carry used soiled linens to the laundry room for washing.
- Bins will be cleaned between each client/practitioner use.

F. Proper Ventilation

- Basic principles of good indoor air quality include supplying outdoor air to replenish indoor air, thereby removing and diluting contaminants that naturally accumulate in indoor settings, especially in well-sealed buildings.
- Absolute Therapy will verify that the property manager is conducting routine preventative maintenance (for example, regular filter changes and inspection of critical components) to ensure that the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are operating as designed, and will report any issues for immediate remedy.
- HEPA-filtration of air in the treatment room may be helpful if the room has no windows or external air exchange. Use of an air filter is at the RMT's preference and discretion.

G. Personal Protective Equipment/ Public Health Measures

- The practitioner will wear a facemask at all times in the clinic, including when entering and exiting the clinic premises.
- Medical gowns are not required to be worn by the practitioner, but are permitted if a practitioner so chooses.
- The practitioner will wear non-latex gloves if/when appropriate.
 - Gloves may be appropriate when over-use of cleaning and/or chemicals causes skin irritation, or when the practitioner's hands or skin of the hands are otherwise injured.
 - Hands will be washed prior to putting the gloves on and immediately after removing them.
 - Gloves may also be worn by the practitioner at the client's request.
- Clients are required to wear a facemask in the clinic at all times.
 - If clients have their own fabric facemask, they are requested to bring it. If they do not have a fabric facemask, a single-use non-medical mask will be provided to them upon their arrival.
- A mask or face covering can be homemade or purchased, and should:
 - Be made of at least 3 layers; 2 layers should be tightly woven material fabric, such as cotton or linen, the third (middle) layer should be a filter-type fabric, such as non-woven polypropylene fabric;
 - Be large enough to completely and comfortably cover the nose, mouth and chin without gaping;
 - All for easy breathing;
 - Fit securely to the head with ties or ear loops;
 - Be comfortable and not require frequent adjustments;
 - Be changed as soon as possible if damp or dirty;
 - Maintain its shape after washing and drying
- Note that face shields, neck gaiters and exhalation valves are not appropriate.

References:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html#a8>

http://www.bccdc.ca/.../Mask_Use_Health_Care_Facilities.pdf

H. Professional Obligations

Liability Insurance

- All practitioners are required to carry their own professional liability insurance.
- The practitioners and staff of the clinic are following all the health and safety guidelines outlined by their respective College(s) and the Provincial Health Officer, and they are taking all reasonable precautions to clean and disinfect the clinic and all the surfaces within the treatment room.
- The practitioners and staff of the clinic are refraining from being present in the clinic if advised to do so by the Provincial Health Officer for any reason.
- No guarantees have been made by the therapist, that the client may not come in contact with COVID-19 at or during an appointment.

In the Event That a Client Discloses Testing Positive for COVID-19 Having Been to an Appointment within the 14-days Prior to Onset of Symptoms

- The practitioner in question will call Public Health at 8-1-1 to report the possible transmission and act on direction of Provincial Health.

In the Event That a Practitioner has been Exposed to an Individual with a Confirmed Positive COVID-19 Test

- The practitioner in question will act on direction of Provincial Health Officer and be tested for COVID-19 as directed.

In the Event That a Client Alleges they Caught COVID-19 from the Practitioner

- The practitioner will immediately call public health at 8-1-1 to report the alleged transmission, providing both the name of the practitioner and the name and contact details of the client.
 - The client must agree to the release of this information in order to receive treatment.
- All appointments will be cancelled and the practitioner will cease to provide services until Public Health has investigated and provided direction.
- The practitioner will immediately self-isolate until Public Health has investigated and provided direction.

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Asymptomatic Spreaders

- Asymptomatic transmission of the coronavirus is an unavoidable risk of practice until herd immunity is achieved, and/or there is an effective treatment or vaccine against COVID-19.
- We have put into place protocols to help mitigate that risk as outlined in the preceding documentation.

I. Informed Consent

In the current environment of COVID-19 risk, informed consent requires that the client be informed and understands that:

- Any treatment involves some risk of COVID-19 transmission;
- The practitioner is following protocol to help reduce or mitigate risk where possible, but that risk cannot be reduced to zero;
- The client consents to the treatment despite some risk;
- And the practitioner will document the client's consent in advance and at every treatment.

