

Return to Work Protocol in Respect of Covid-19

This plan was developed with the goal of reducing the risk of exposure to the virus that causes Covid-19 for both patients and staff within our clinical setting. Here, we identify the actions that the staff at Element Therapeutics commit to, and that all visiting patients must commit to, in order to resume clinic 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 elbow and wash your hands regularly.”

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

The overall aim of these protocols is to reduce potential coronavirus transmission by:

- Required ongoing self-assessment for signs of Covid-19 related illness in both the patient and the staff
- Reducing all physical, non-treatment related interactions amongst all people within the practice environment
- Hand hygiene requirements
- Avoiding face touching
- Enhanced cleaning protocols
- Appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Meeting professional obligations, particularly related to informed consent and liability insurance

Self-Assessment for Symptoms of Covid-19: For Patients & Therapists

Pre-Screening / Prior to Arrival

- Patients will be informed about their responsibilities at the time of booking. Information will be provided on our online booking site with a link to these detailed protocols listed on our website.
- One day prior to their booked appointment, the patient will be called by a receptionist for a pre-screen asking the patient if they have traveled outside Canada, have experienced any cold or flu like symptoms, or have had close contact with someone diagnosed with or presumed to have Covid-19. They are reminded to stay home if they develop symptoms at any time
- The patient is required to fill out a more detailed screening assessment form just prior (within 12 hours) to their appointment through our online booking system. If they do not complete it online, their therapist will verbally go through the form with them before they are allowed to have treatment.
 - The patient will be required to sign (electronically) a consent and liability waiver with respect to Covid-19 prior to **EVERY** appointment which is included on the screening form.
 - If a patient knows they are not able to complete the form online, they will arrange to go through the form over the phone with a staff member prior to their appointment

- All staff will use the BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment tool daily and commits to not coming into work if symptoms appear
- Symptoms of Covid-19 are similar to other respiratory illnesses and seasonal allergies. An appointment must be cancelled immediately if either the patient or the therapist presents with even mild symptoms that may be signs of Covid-19 including: fever, cough, chills, shortness of breath, sore throat or pain with swallowing, stuffy or runny nose, loss of sense of smell, abnormal headache or muscle aches, fatigue, loss of appetite
- Covid-19 Symptoms may range from mild to severe. Patients are required to cancel appointments even if they experience what they determine to be 'just the sniffles,' 'seasonal allergies' or 'just feeling under the weather,' on the day of their appointment.
- Patients will not be charged a late cancellation fee if they cancel due to illness.
- Patients must 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.
- As a part of the consent form, patients must commit to understanding that while we've taken all possible measures to minimize risk of viral transmission, the nature of massage therapy and physiotherapy treatment means that physical distancing is not possible in the treatment room.
- Patients with higher risk profiles and/or weakened immune systems should consider alternatives for care and postpone treatment.
- The therapist and patient must agree that the therapeutic benefit of massage therapy or physiotherapy outweighs any potential consequence of treatment, including the possibility of viral transmission.

Upon Arrival

- The therapist will advise the patient of their current results from online BC COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment tool.
- The therapist must confirm that the patient has completed the Element Therapeutics pre-screening form and have no signs of Covid-19
 - If the patient does not complete the form electronically, the therapist will go through the form with the patient either on the phone or outside the clinic prior to the patient being allowed inside.
- The treatment will be cancelled immediately if the patient does not meet the pre-screening criteria upon physical presentation at the clinic.

Personal Protective Equipment, Physical Distancing, Hygiene and Cleaning Protocols

Staff arrival and departure from clinic

- Staff will bring their clinic clothes in a sterilized container (bag/bin) to change into immediately in the clinic restrooms
 - After removal of personal clothes, staff will thoroughly wash their hands before putting on clinic clothes. Personal clothes can be put into their storage container to be changed back into when they are departing from the clinic. Staff members are advised to put their clinic clothes directly into the wash when they arrive home. The storage container will be sanitized before the clean clinic clothes go back into it.
 - It is recommended that therapist showers as soon as they arrive home
 - Therapist will be required to have shoes designated solely to the clinic, that will have to be sanitized if they are removed from the clinic

Reception Area

- Clinic access will be by appointment only. There will be a notice on the door asking customers to call if they have retail or booking inquiries. If other patients are not in the reception area, the receptionist can use their own discretion to go to the door if someone is knocking to come in.
- The clinic door will be opened for the patient by the therapist and will be locked behind them to prevent anyone else from entering. The clinic door will be re-opened by the therapist at the end of the appointment for the patient to leave without touching the door.
- Only 1 patient/person is permitted in the reception space (in front of reception desk) at any given time; patients must arrive unaccompanied unless absolutely necessary (such as a minor)
- Immediately upon entering the clinic space the patient must either:
 - Go directly to the handwashing sink without touching anything inside the clinic and wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and then dry thoroughly, or
 - Use the hand sanitizer provided at the entryway
 - If hands are visibly soiled, the patient must opt to wash hands at the handwashing sink
- Patients will be advised not to wear gloves when arriving at the clinic. If the patient is wearing gloves, they will be instructed to remove the gloves before entering the clinic and asked to only put them back on after leaving the clinic
- Masks must be worn at all times within the clinic space. Patients are encouraged to bring their own mask and wear it when they arrive. If the patient does not have a mask, a single-use mask will be provided and they will be asked to wear it upon entering the clinic space.
 - Patients are required to wear face masks that cover both the nose and mouth at all times within the clinic space.
- The therapist and the patient will both maintain a space of 2 meters (6 feet) distance between each other in all clinic areas that are outside the treatment room - signs will be posted throughout the clinic for reminders
 - When possible, physical distancing will still be practiced while in the treatment room
- Vinyl-covered chairs that are separated by a minimum of 2 meters will be available in the reception area if necessary for sitting, and will be sanitized at least twice a day
- Reception floors, including office and washroom, will be swept and mopped twice a day, or more often when visibly soiled, by reception staff
- Patients are not permitted to lounge in the clinic reception area before or after the treatment
- Water glasses will not be provided for patient use (unless for an emergency) and all patients will be encouraged to bring their own water bottle
- Unnecessary items that cannot be disinfected after each touch - toys, books, magazines, business card racks - have been removed from the waiting area
- Appointment times are scheduled to reduce the potential of patients crossing paths, and to allow for time in-between sessions for enhanced cleaning.
- Patients are asked to arrive on time for appointments and no earlier than 5 minutes before
- Patients are required to wait in their vehicles or outside the clinic, until the therapist comes to the clinic door to call them in
- Patients who are being treated upstairs will not be permitted to enter the main floor clinic space, except to provide payment. They are to go straight upstairs no sooner than 5 minutes before their appointment and wait outside for their therapist to open the door
- Payment:
 - Cash will not be accepted at this time
 - Patients will be emailed an invoice and may pay for appointments through e-transfer or credit card over the phone

- In cases when the POS machine must be used, it will be sanitized between each use and a tap function will be available
 - Receipts will be emailed, not printed unless absolutely necessary
- No more than 2 staff will be permitted behind the reception desk at one time, while respecting physical distancing of 2 meters

Treatment Room

- The therapist will open and close the treatment room doors themselves as much as possible to avoid patients touching them. In many cases it is unavoidable that the patient will touch the door, and therefore the door and handles will be sanitized between each treatment regardless.
 - Physiotherapists will leave the treatment doors open when possible to reduce contact
- Fabric chairs have been removed from the treatment rooms. If a patient needs to sit, they are advised to sit on the treatment table.
- All unnecessary items that cannot be put in a closed cabinet or sanitized between patients have been removed from the rooms.
- We will increase fans and ventilation to encourage air circulation
- Vinyl covers have been put on massage tables to cover table heaters for proper disinfection protocols
- No bolsters or accessories will be used that cannot be properly sanitized or laundered after each use
- Hydroculator packs and thermophores will not be permitted at this time, gel packs can be used as an alternative heat source
- Additional time has been scheduled between patients to allow for thorough cleaning of the treatment room
- All staff will be instructed on how to use the sanitizers provided by the clinic, ie how long the product needs to remain on surfaces to be effective
 - All sanitizers provided by the clinic will be on on the "[List of disinfectants with evidence for use against COVID-19](#)" approved by the Canadian government
 - We are using Biotext from Micrylium Laboratories, DIN 0229640
- Practitioners are responsible for proper sanitizing of treatment room between each patient
 - All linens (towels, massage sheets, pillow cases, blankets) are single use only and will be laundered after each appointment
 - The treatment table, table levers, face cradle, bolsters and vinyl covered pillows, lotion bottles, floor space below face hole, practitioner stool, faucets, door knobs, hooks for patient's clothes and light switches will be disinfected immediately after each treatment
 - Entire floor will be mopped twice per day, or if room is only used for a half day then once at the end of the shift is sufficient
- If practitioner is planning to use electronic devices during treatment, they must always wash their hands immediately after they touch the device (ie devices for charting or music)
 - Therapists will sanitize their computers on a daily basis or more if required
- Patients will be advised not to bring extra "stuff" to appointment to avoid needing a place to store it, they will be discouraged from touching their phones, keys, etc, or will be instructed to rewash or sanitize their hands
 - Physiotherapy patients are required to bring their own clothing items needed for assessment/treatment as we will no longer be lending them out.

Gym Space

- Each therapist will have their own personal theraband and tubing to use for instructing patients

- If a patient uses theraband or tubing, it will be added to the cost of their appointment and they will take it home with them
- All equipment will be disinfected by the therapist after each use
- The gym will no longer be open to public use
- The gym must be used only within physiotherapy appointment time, therapists will no longer allow patients to stay past their appointment time to use equipment
- The therapist is responsible for sweeping and mopping the gym at least twice a day
- Therapists are required to be mindful of sharing the gym space while another practitioner and patient are in the gym. Only one practitioner and patient will be allowed in the gym at one time to maintain proper physical distancing of 2 meters
 - When possible, instruct exercises within the treatment room

Restroom Use

- The restrooms are equipped with soap and paper towels and proper handwashing guidelines
- Soap and fresh paper towels for drying will be available at all times
- All staff, including therapists, are responsible for sanitizing restroom after patient use
- All staff are responsible for sanitizing restroom after personal use
- Patients are recommended to use their washroom at home before arriving at clinic as much as possible to avoid public use

Shared Staff Spaces

- Only 1 staff member is permitted to be in the office at one time
- No patients are permitted in the office
- At the end of their shift, practitioners are required clear off the desk ready for other practitioners to use and to disinfect their workspace - desk, chair
 - Desks should all be cleared off so they can be properly sanitized
- Practitioners are to avoid going behind the receptionist desk unless necessary, ie to do laundry
- The staff kitchen space will be closed and staff must bring their own dishes, coffee mugs, water bottles, and take them home with them each day

Practitioner Hand Hygiene

- The therapist will wash hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds:
 - Immediately after entering clinic and just prior to exiting
 - Before and after opening clinic door for patients
 - Before and after treatment
 - Before and after disinfecting spaces
 - Before and after proper donning and doffing of PPE such as gloves, masks, eye protection, aprons
 - After touching any electronic devices
- Hand washing protocols will be posted visibly in the reception area and at sinks.

Avoid Face Touching

- It will be communicated with patients that coronavirus can be transmitted by touch if droplets are on the hand when it touches the face, as it can transfer those infected droplets to the mouth, nose or eyes.
- Tissue will be available throughout the clinic: in the reception area, treatment room and washroom in order that patients and the therapist may use tissue to address an itch and/or touch the face for any other reason.
- Intraoral and external TMJ treatments will not be conducted at this time.
- Musculature of the face will not be palpated or treated at this time.

Personal Protective Equipment

Patient:

- All patients will be required to wear a mask at all times
- If patients have their own fabric facemask, they are requested to make sure it is clean and to arrive at the clinic wearing it
- If patients do not have their own mask, a single-use mask will be provided at the time of their treatment
- Safety glasses will be available for patients to wear in supine and side lying positions if requested or the practitioner deems it appropriate

Practitioner:

- Therapists will wear a surgical face mask at all times while they are working with patients
 - Therapists may remove masks if they are alone in a room working on charting
- Safety glasses will be available for the practitioner to wear if they deem it necessary
- The therapist's face mask will be changed after each appointment
- Safety glasses will be sanitized between each appointment
- Gloves or finger cots are always required when the therapist's hand/finger is injured with broken skin
- All staff are advised to use gloves when using cleaning products
- Hands will be washed prior to putting the gloves on and immediately after removing them.

Professional Obligations

Liability Insurance

- Each therapist carries their own professional liability insurance and is required to know their policy requirements
- All practitioners follow the health and safety guidelines outlined by the College of Massage Therapists of British Columbia, the College of Physical Therapists of British Columbia, WorkSafe BC and the Provincial Health Officer and take all reasonable precautions to clean and disinfect the clinic and all the surfaces within the treatment room.
- No guarantees have been made by the therapist, that the patient may not come in contact with COVID-19 at or during an appointment.

- The patient will contact the clinic immediately and inform them of positive test results and possible transmission of the virus immediately

In the Event That a Patient Alleges they Caught COVID-19 from the Therapist

- The therapist will immediately call public health at 8-1-1 to report the alleged transmission, providing both the name of the RMT and the name and contact details of the patient.
- All appointments will be cancelled and the therapist will cease to provide services until Public Health has investigated and provided direction.
- The therapist will immediately self-isolate until Public Health has investigated and provided direction

In the Event That the Therapist Catches COVID-19 or Displays Symptoms of Covid-19

- The therapist will immediately self-isolate.
- The therapist will call public health at 8-1-1 to report the symptoms and request access to Covid-19 testing.
 - If testing is granted:
 - All appointments with that therapist will be cancelled and the therapist will cease to provide services until test results are returned negative.
 - If testing proves positive the therapist will follow Public Health directives in informing patients treated over the previous 14 days about potential transmission.
 - If testing is not granted:
 - All appointments with that therapist will be cancelled and the therapist will cease to provide services for a minimum of 10-days beyond the onset of symptoms, and/or until symptoms cease.

In the Event That the Therapist Comes into Close Contact with Someone Showing Signs of Illness or Tests Positive for Covid-19

- The therapist will immediately self-isolate.
- All appointments with that therapist will be cancelled and the therapist will cease to provide services until:
 - The close contact has been tested for Covid-19 and the results proved negative and the therapist is well,
 - OR after self-isolating for 14 days and having no symptoms of Covid-19 develop
 - OR being cleared by a public health official

In the event that any suspected Covid-19 case has come into the clinic, we cancel all upcoming appointments for 48 hours then will follow the advice of public health.

- Office Manager is first to be notified, who will then contact the Massage Therapy and Physiotherapy Directors to follow up with their respective practitioners. Practitioners will follow the advice provided by Public Health and contact their patients who may have been exposed

Asymptomatic Spreaders

- Asymptomatic transmission of the coronavirus is an unavoidable risk of practice until we've acquired herd immunity, 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.
- No guarantees have been made by the therapist, that the patient may not come in contact with Covid-19 at or during an appointment.

Informed Consent

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

- Any massage therapy or physiotherapy treatment involves some risk of Covid-19 transmission
- The therapist is following protocol to help reduce or mitigate risk where possible, but that risk cannot be reduced to zero;
- The patient must consent to the treatment despite some risk, or alternative treatment can be advised, such as a telehealth appointment