

Absolute Therapy: Clinical Practice Policies 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 clients and the practitioners within our clinical setting. Here, we identify the actions that the practitioners at Absolute Therapy commit to, and that all visiting clients must commit to, in order to resume therapeutic services.

“Coronavirus is transmitted via liquid droplets when a person coughs. 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.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:

- A. Required ongoing self-assessment for signs of COVID-19 related illness in both the client and the practitioner
- B. Reducing all physical, non-treatment related interactions amongst all people within the practice environment
- C. Hand hygiene requirements
- D. Avoiding face touching
- E. Enhanced cleaning protocols
- F. Appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- G. Meeting professional obligations, particularly related to informed consent and liability insurance

A. Self-Assessment for Symptoms of COVID-19: 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 questionnaire that will be sent to them within 24 hours of the start of their appointment time.
- One day prior to their booked appointment, the client will be required to complete a COVID-19 specific screening questionnaire and consent form they will be required to sign electronically, prior to arriving at their appointment.
- The practitioner will use the BC COVID-19 Assessment tool daily and commits to canceling 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 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
 - Headache
 - Muscle aches
 - Fatigue
 - Loss of appetite
- As a part of this consent form, 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 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.
- Clients with higher risk profiles and/or weakened immune systems should consider alternatives for care and postpone treatment.
- Clients who develop even mild illness or symptoms should cancel booked appointments, even without notice.
- 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 completed the screening questionnaire and have no signs of COVID-19 as outlined here: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/about-covid-19/symptoms>
- 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 and they will be asked to wear it upon entering the clinic space.
- Clients must confirm that they have not travelled outside British Columbia within 14 days prior to their appointment.
- The treatment will be cancelled immediately if the client does not meet the pre-screening criteria upon physical presentation at the clinic.

B. Physical Distancing

Reception Area / Entry into Clinic Space

- Clients will be instructed to enter the building through the main door on the north side and to take the elevator or stairs to the 2nd floor; when exiting will be instructed to do so by the stairs on the south side of the building to mitigate one-way traffic in the stairwells
- Only 1 client and 1 staff member or practitioner is permitted in the reception space at any given time. Clients must arrive unaccompanied, with the exception of a guardian for minors.
- All parties will maintain a space of 2 meters (6 feet) distance between each other in all clinic areas outside the treatment room.
- The fabric chairs have been removed from the reception area.
- Clients will be instructed to arrive on time for their appointments, and will not be permitted to lounge in the clinic reception area before or after the treatment.
- Water dispenser, glasses, candy dish, magazines, business cards and other promotional materials have all been removed from the clinic reception area.
- Nothing remains in the clinic space that cannot be disinfected after each touch.
- 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 Treatment Room

- It is not possible to maintain physical distancing while in the treatment room.
- Clients will be asked to leave all personal belongings in their vehicles.

Within the Clinic Common Areas (Kitchen & Laundry Room)

- No more than 1 practitioner at a time in both the kitchen and laundry room
- Maximum of 5 practitioners in clinic premises at all times; practitioner shifts are staggered to minimize contact with other practitioners both before and after shifts and in between client appointments.
- Practitioners should either remain in their treatment room or exit the clinic during any breaks
- Staggered appointment times allow for additional time in-between appointments for enhanced cleaning of treatment rooms and common areas while minimizing the potential for practitioner crossover in both the kitchen (for handwashing) and laundry areas

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 PPE like facemasks or shields, after touching soiled laundry, tools, equipment and delivery items.
- Practitioner and staff hand washing will occur in a separate area from where laundry is done.
- Hand washing protocols will be posted visibly at all sinks.
- Payment occurs in the reception area. Cash will not be accepted at this time. 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.
- Receipts will be emailed, not printed.

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

- The practitioner will communicate with the client 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 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 and external TMJ treatments will not be conducted at this time.**
- **Musculature of the face will not be palpated or treated at this time.**

E. Enhanced Cleaning

- Additional time has been scheduled between clients to allow for thorough cleaning of the treatment room.
- Soiled surfaces will be cleaned followed by disinfection with a Canada Health Approved for use against COVID-19 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 twice 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.
- All high touch surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected between clients, regardless of appearances. High touch surfaces include (but are not limited to):
 - Light switches, door knobs, POS machine, electronic devices, telephone, table surfaces, chairs, stools, faucets, etc.
 - 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.
- 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 disinfected single-use plastic bin has been placed in the treatment room. The client will be asked to keep all of their personal belongings in this bin during the treatment. Post treatment, this same bin will be used to carry used linens to the laundry room for washing.
- Disinfected bins will be placed in the kitchen area for the practitioners use; the practitioners are to keep all of their personal belongings in these bins for the duration of their shift
- Bins will be disinfected between each client/practitioner use.

F. Personal Protective Equipment

- The practitioner will wear a facemask at all times in the clinic, including when entering and exiting the clinic premises, and will don a new mask for each client/treatment.
- The practitioner will change into a fresh set of clothes upon entering the clinic space; medical gowns are not required, but 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.

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- Clients are required to wear a facemask in the clinic at all time.
 - If clients have their own fabric facemask, they are requested to bring it. If they do not have a fabric face mask, a single-use non-medical mask will be provided to them upon their arrival.

G. Professional Obligations

Liability Insurance

- All practitioners are required to carry their own professional liability insurance.
- The practitioner is following all the health and safety guidelines outlined by their respective College(s) and the Provincial Health Officer, and that they are taking 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 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 immediately self-isolate.
- 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 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.

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.

H. 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.

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