



College of
Massage
Therapists of
Ontario

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Pandemic Planning Information for Massage Therapists

With the arrival of flu season in Ontario, the College has prepared a list of considerations that massage therapists should review in the advent of a possible influenza pandemic.

Things to consider for your practice:

Infection Control in Your Practice

- Massage therapists should have a plan that includes ways to decrease the spread of infection within their practice setting. The College's Infection Control Guidelines (http://www.cmtto.com/pdfs/Infection_Control_Guidelines.pdf) provides basic information to members on routine precautions, use of personal protection equipment, and how to disinfect their clinic space.
- Ensure that you have a stock of personal protection equipments (masks, gloves, etc.) and cleaning supplies so you can follow through with your plan.
- Review Communication / Public Health Standard 3 on Hand Washing, Communication / Public Health Standard 5 on Risk Identification and Management for an Outbreak of Infectious Diseases, and Communication / Public Health Standard 15 on Use of Personal Protective Equipment.

Screening Clients for Infections

- Massage therapists need be aware of the symptoms related to any outbreak of an infectious disease. If a screening tool becomes available, or is made mandatory, members will be able to access the screening tool on the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care's (MOHLTC) website (<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/>).
- Massage Therapists should consider contacting their clients prior to their appointment and ask them to self-screen for illness. This would help reduce the risk of spreading any infection. If you have a cancellation policy, you may want to consider waiving it for the duration of the pandemic to encourage clients to stay home if they are ill.

Closing / Reducing your Practice for the Duration of the Pandemic or if a General Quarantine is Called

- Consider when and under what circumstances you will treat your clients
- Plan for the drop in income that will occur with fewer clients able to seek treatment
- Consider how you will contact your clients before, during and after the duration of the pandemic.
- If the health authorities declare a general quarantine for your jurisdiction, you will need to close your practice. Plan on how you will notify your clients.

Things to Consider for Yourself:

Personal Considerations

- Massage therapists will have a number of ethical decisions to make regarding their duty to their families vs. their commitment to the public as a health care professional. As regulated health care professionals, massage therapists have duty to members of society to help with their well-being and health, but that duty has to be weighed against the massage therapist's duty to any dependents that they may need to care for. Each therapist will have to make their own decision regarding how and where they can assist during a pandemic situation.
- Massage therapists are encouraged to be vaccinated against the flu. Vaccination is the best defence against getting the flu yourself and infecting others.

How Can I Help?

- Many massage therapists do not know how they can use their skills and knowledge to assist in a pandemic situation. Section 8 of the *Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic 2008* (http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/pan_flu/pan_flu_plan.html) provides a self-assessment tool to identify your skills and knowledge that can be utilized in the event of a pandemic.
- Think of skills that you use every day, taking a health history, record keeping, assessment, infection control knowledge and think of how they could be used in a pandemic situation. The self-assessment tool also helps you identify competencies that you could perform with a little more training or under supervision so don't count those out either. The *Ontario Health Plan* also includes a list of volunteer centres which can assist you.
- Massage therapists are encouraged by the College to consider reaching out to those healthcare professionals and others such as police, fire and paramedical services that are directly involved with emergency operations, communications, planning and logistics by providing massage therapy care to them to ensure they are able to continue working in their key roles.

Where to Find Information

The MOHLTC is the main source of information for health care professionals in Ontario in a pandemic situation. Massage therapists should refer to the MOHLTC website on a regular bases to ensure they have the most up-to-date information

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ccom/flu/h1n1/pro/>

The College's website will update information as needed and provide links to other resources.

www.cmto.com

WHO pandemic plan

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/PIPGuidance09.pdf>

<http://www.who.int/en/>

Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/>

Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>