



College of
Massage
Therapists of
Ontario

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Frequently Asked Questions for Clients* of Massage Therapists College of Massage Therapists of Ontario's (CMTO's) Standards for Maintaining Professional Boundaries and Preventing Sexual Abuse

Why did CMTO establish the new *Standards for Maintaining Professional Boundaries and Preventing Sexual Abuse* (the “Standards”)?

CMTO established the new *Standards* to improve client safety in response to the *Protecting Patients Act, 2017*, which aims to eradicate sexual abuse by health professionals, and to improve CMTO's enforcement abilities. CMTO's mission and vision includes protecting the public interest and staying at the forefront of evolving regulation to inspire confidence and trust.

In the new legislation, touching of a sexual nature of a client's breasts, anus, genitals or buttocks has been added to the list of acts for which a CMTO Disciplinary Panel must revoke a Massage Therapist's (RMT's or MT's) Certificate of Registration where the conduct has been found to have occurred.

As Massage Therapy can involve the appropriate touching of some of these parts of the body (e.g., the breasts or buttocks) in the course of therapeutic or clinical treatment, it was necessary for CMTO to ensure that RMTs were provided with professional *Standards* to help navigate the treatment of sensitive areas with their clients.

What does the new *Standard* mean for clients like me?

The new *Standard* requires RMTs to ask you for written consent prior to touching “sensitive areas” of the body as part of your treatment.

CMTO defines “sensitive areas,” as the upper inner thighs, gluteal muscles (buttocks), breasts, and front chest wall.

Written consent ensures that the conversation about treating sensitive areas has in fact taken place and that you are empowered to indicate, in writing, whether you consent / agree to having your sensitive areas touched.

* If you are an RMT, please find Frequently-Asked Questions for RMTs [here](#).

Do I have to give consent every time?

Yes, if you want your sensitive area treated, then you must consent each time. In CMTO's experience, abuse can occur on the second or subsequent visit, not just on the first visit. This is why consent at each visit is critical to ensure client safety.

Your Massage Therapist will ask for your written consent before each treatment for the breasts, front chest wall and the upper inner thighs. For treatments of the gluteal muscles (buttocks), your Massage Therapist will obtain your written consent at the beginning of a treatment plan, then verbally for additional treatments within that same treatment plan. The whole process should just take a couple of minutes of your time unless you have further questions.

How does a written consent form help to prevent sexual abuse?

Written consent ensures you are provided with an opportunity to have an informed discussion about treatment of your sensitive area(s) and have an opportunity to specifically agree or decline to have those areas touched by your Massage Therapist. As a regulator, CMTO must take all reasonable steps to prevent abuse and does so by requiring the RMT to engage you in a thorough discussion about the assessment and treatment process he or she will be providing. This will open a two-way line of communication to establish and confirm your expectations.

The requirement for written consent may prevent some cases of abuse, and where it cannot prevent abuse, it will make it easier to prove that the sexual abuse occurred.

Can I still report abuse if I signed a written consent form, but was subsequently touched inappropriately?

Absolutely. If you provide consent to have your sensitive areas treated, you would be consenting to have them touched in an appropriate, clinical fashion. Any such consent does not give the Massage Therapist the permission to touch you in a sexual or sexualized manner. In fact, CMTO's sample written consent form provides a reminder to clients that you can withdraw your consent at any time. Should you consent to a treatment of a sensitive area and subsequently believe you have been touched inappropriately, or that an area for which you did not give consent was touched, you should contact CMTO to find out the steps you can take to report this behaviour. CMTO would initiate an investigation and would collect information related to your complaint.