

What Clients Can Expect from the Consent Discussion

As a person receiving Massage Therapy, you have the right to receive all the information you need to make informed decisions about your care. That's why Registered Massage Therapists (RMTs/MTs) follow mandatory consent requirements at every appointment and before beginning any assessment and/or treatment. Here are some fundamentals about the consent process between you and your RMT.

What is consent?

Assessment and treatment, and any changes to the RMT's approach to your care, can only happen after you have given your RMT informed and voluntary consent. Informed and voluntary consent means that you have been given all the information about the proposed treatment, the opportunity to ask questions, and that you are agreeing to treatment/assessment freely and without pressure. Your RMT is responsible for initiating the consent discussion and providing the necessary information; if needed, you can bring someone with you.

During the consent discussion, the RMT will:

- provide a full description of the proposed treatment/assessment;
- explain how the proposed treatment can help you meet your treatment goals;
- explain any risks
- explain any side effects;
- inform you of alternative options to meet your treatment goals and the likely consequences of not having treatment; and
- allow you to ask questions about the information provided and let you know that it's your right to stop and/or ask for changes to assessment or treatment at any time.

If you feel comfortable and confident after the discussion, you can provide verbal consent to begin assessment and/or treatment. Every time you provide consent, your RMT must document the discussion.

Your RMT will obtain consent at different times throughout the course of treatment to ensure you are comfortable with any proposed changes to the treatment plan. Consent to any type of assessment or treatment can also be withdrawn or changed at any time (see below for more information).

Even if you've had a long-standing therapeutic relationship with an RMT, this discussion must happen before each assessment and treatment (and before any proposed changes) because consent is an on-going process. When you provide consent, you are agreeing to proceed at that time and not indefinitely.

Consent for treatment of sensitive areas

For consent to treat/assess sensitive areas, RMTs will have the same discussion noted above, but will ask you to sign to confirm consent (or electronic/digital equivalent). This written consent will be kept in your client record to confirm that you consented to a specific assessment/treatment at that time, based on what your RMT explained in the consent discussion.

CMTO considers the following to be sensitive areas and written consent must be obtained before treating these areas:

- upper inner thighs
- chest wall muscles
- breasts
- buttocks (gluteal muscles)

These areas may only be treated/assessed for a specific concern/need as part of your treatment plan. Before treatment and/or assessment of sensitive areas, your RMT will explain the reasons why assessing/treating that area is recommended and their approach, including how you will be draped during treatment of the sensitive area, and the RMT can only proceed after you provide written consent.

For the **upper inner thighs, chest wall** and **breasts**, your RMT must have the consent discussion and obtain your written consent before every assessment, treatment and/or at any time the treatment approach needs to change from what you previously consented to. For assessing and/or treating **buttocks**, your RMT must have the consent discussion with you and obtain your written consent once per treatment plan. For every subsequent assessment and/or treatment of the buttocks, they will have the consent discussion with you and obtain verbal consent.

You may notice that your RMT obtained written consent for a sensitive area that they ultimately do not treat. This can happen for a few reasons, such as:

- while assessing and/or treating, the RMT determined that treating the area was not necessary to achieve treatment goals;
- the RMT treated very close to the sensitive area; and/or
- the RMT checked in during assessment or treatment and you expressed you were no longer comfortable with assessing or treating that area (i.e., you withdrew your consent).

You are also encouraged to describe the boundaries of your body that you'd like your RMT to assess/treat with extra sensitivity, including those not listed above. You can request that RMTs use appropriate language or terms you use to describe your body.

Changing your mind

Sometimes we think we'll be comfortable with a proposed assessment or treatment, and later it may not feel right.

When you provide consent, you are agreeing to proceed at that time. You have the right to change or withdraw consent at any time, for any reason, without consequence. You can ask for changes to the treatment plan or that treatment be stopped at any time. RMTs, as regulated healthcare professionals, can't penalize clients for changing their minds.

RMTs are responsible for making clients feel safe and comfortable requesting any changes to the treatment plan. In addition to creating an environment in which you can request changes, your RMT will observe how you respond to treatment and assessment, seek your feedback, and re-verify consent if necessary.

If you have questions about consent, or questions or concerns about your treatment with an RMT, please [connect with the College of Massage Therapists of Ontario](#). We are here to help.