

COVID 19: Massage Therapist Return to Practice Guidance

Part 1: Introduction

The Washington State Massage Therapy Association has been hard at work accessing the most current and most reliable information available to us. Whether you have continued to see patients with urgent medical needs, or you are considering how to adjust your environment and practices when you choose to return to work when you are able to, we have information for you. We want you to be able to work in the safest (for you and your patients/clients) and most professional and ethical way possible.

Much of the information we will bring to you comes from the Centers for Disease and Control, Occupational Safety and Health Organization, American Medical Association, the American Dental Association and the American Academy of Ophthalmologists. Dentists, like massage therapists, work face to face with their patients for extended periods of time, so we felt this was a close match for us.

What are the important parameters here?

- Access reliable information.
- Avoid panic and rumors.
- Follow recommendations/guidance from public health entities; CDC, Federal government, WA State, WA Department of Health and any county or city public health guidance that may be in place.
- Heed the call to temporarily suspend all massages that are not urgent and medically necessary until public health officials indicate it is appropriate to resume non-urgent practice.

Why did we need to stop providing massage that is not urgent?

- We cannot reliably identify patients/clients who are asymptomatic/presymptomatic. This puts us, our families and all of our patients/clients at risk.
- The Department of Health recommended that only massage that is urgent and medically necessary be performed and that appropriate PPE be used during that massage, but...
- Supplies of PPE are low and what PPE is available needs to be prioritized for frontline providers.

Considering that patients/clients who are asymptomatic/presymptomatic may still be COVID-19 infectious, it should be assumed that all patients/clients can transmit disease. What does the WSMTA recommend currently, when treating urgent-only patients/clients and when it is appropriate for us to resume non-urgent massage practice?

- Use the highest level of PPE available when treating patients/clients to reduce the risk of exposure.
- If surgical masks in use with either goggles or face shields are not available, please understand there is a higher risk for infection exposure; therefore, use your professional judgment related to treatment provided and the patient/client's risk factors as well as your own risk factors.
- Make sure that you receive informed consent regarding the fact that some infection risk is inherent in all scenarios, despite the best precautions and practices.

The next editions of "COVID 19: Massage Therapist Return to Practice Guidance" will be, Part 2: "WSMTA's Interim Guidance on PPE" and the "WSMTA's Interim Guidance on Sanitation" for Massage Therapist. Shortly following that will be, Part 3 "WSMTA's Interim Guidance on Practice Guidelines".

Please take care of yourself and your families.

Marybeth Berney, WSMTA President

www.mywsmta.org

info@mywsmta.org