

Newfoundland and Labrador College of Physiotherapists Updated Guideline for Practice of Private Physiotherapy Clinics as per NL's COVID-19 Alert Level 2

The Newfoundland and Labrador College of Physiotherapists(NLCP) would like to thank members and other healthcare providers for their continued work on the front lines during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please see details of the NL COVID-19 Alert Levels here:

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/alert-system/>

As we progress through the Alert Levels, it is important to recognize the core principles of the protective measures that must remain in place. These guidelines aim to protect the public, Physiotherapy professionals, and all staff working in private practice Physiotherapy clinics.

The core personal protective measures that physiotherapists must ensure are:

- * Remaining informed of the advice given by Public Health and the Chief Medical Officer of Health
- * Follow all mandates and recommendations from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador regarding your personal and professional conduct. As a regulated health professional, you have a responsibility to follow all civic orders that originate from any level of government.
- * The NLCP encourages the continued use of tele-rehabilitation where suitable. Please visit <https://nlcpt.com/> for more detail regarding tele-rehabilitation.

Alert Level 2 Guidelines

This document applies to private sector Physiotherapists. Physiotherapists practicing in a private practice setting must follow the protocols established within their workplaces and through Newfoundland and Labrador Public Health. Physiotherapists are responsible for ensuring the appropriate measures are in place for the setting (s) in which they provide care.

Clinic Physical Space:

Protective measures for receptionists/reception areas:

- Receptionists should be positioned behind a barrier (e.g. Sneeze guard). If a barrier is not present, the receptionist may be advised to wear a procedural mask or cloth mask.
- Remove all non-essential items from the waiting areas (including but not limited to magazines, toys, books, and remote controls)
- Clean and disinfect any high touch areas or items that cannot be removed between patients, i.e. pens, chairs, door handles, clipboards etc. (for more information, please refer to <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning-NL.pdf>)
- Display appropriate signage for symptom awareness, hand washing, COVID-19 protocols, etc.
- Hand sanitizer (approved by Health Canada) or hand washing stations must be available
- Modify seating in waiting room so that there is a minimum of two metres of space between patients
- Provide virtual waiting rooms by promoting online or over the phone scheduling, over the phone pre-screening and consent, and promoting contactless or on-line payment. Waiting room strategies could include waiting in cars and patient receives a text or call on when to come in for appointment
- Have clearly defined protocols in place and available to provide to any patient or stakeholder with questions
- Where available have a one-way flow through your clinic space

Scheduling:

Physiotherapists should ensure that booking practices enable physical distancing between patients while in the waiting room and/or in treatment sessions. Physiotherapists have to plan for time to clean and disinfect (i.e. equipment/tables etc) between patients and ensure proper hand hygiene between patients.

Screen and Education:

On the day of the appointment the clinic will conduct a COVID-19 screen with the patient. Patients who have someone accompanying them to their appointments, should also be screened using the same questions as the patient.

At the time of booking, clinics may choose to educate new patients on the protective measures that are put in place for their protection.

Patients entering the Facility:

The patient upon entering will wash their hands for 20 seconds or will use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer approved by Health Canada. The patient will either have their own mask (cloth or procedural) or avail of one at the clinic to be worn during the time in the clinic.

During the consultation:

Due to the highly infectious nature of this virus, all physiotherapists who provide direct patient care must wear a surgical/procedural mask. A care risk assessment should be completed to determine the PPE needs for each individual patient encounter. One mask may be used of the entire shift, however must be replaced properly is wet, damaged or soiled.

After the appointment:

Once the patient is directed out of the treatment area, they again must wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before departure. The Physiotherapist must also wash their own hands prior to the next patient. If soiled, the mask must be changed. If other PPE is being used the appropriate rules for removal must be followed.

The treatment area including the plinth/table, chair, instruments, and equipment must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before and after each visit. If linens are used, they must be changed and laundered appropriately.

Gym usage:

Where the clinic has an exercise area which is being used for physiotherapy treatment, the physiotherapist will ensure that physical distancing measures are in place between clients. All PPE, hand washing, cleaning and disinfecting requirements would apply.

Staff Screening:

At NO time, will any staff member, health professional or Physiotherapist attend work if feeling unwell. Staff should complete a COVID-19 screening prior to every shift.

Protective measures for Physiotherapists:

- Ensure that scheduling allows the appropriate time in between patients to thoroughly clean the treatment area.
- Maintain physical distancing in shared workspaces. Where the 2 meter distance between people is not possible, a mask is to be worn.
- Where possible avoid sharing of phones, desks, offices and other tools and equipment.
- Physiotherapists are advised to change their clothes at the end of their shift and bag the work clothing in a laundry bag to wash at home.

Increased cleaning schedule for clinics:

Ensure that your business has a schedule for cleaning and has a designated person who is responsible for the inventory of cleaning supplies. Clinics should increase their frequency of cleaning and disinfecting with Health Canada approved sanitization of all surfaces, including but not limited to desks, door knobs, bathrooms, chairs, pens, modalities, furniture, weights, instruments, tables/plinths, charting spaces, mobile devices and screens.

Home Care/Long Term Care

Providing care in a patient's home has the potential for increased risk due to the variability of the environment in which the care is provided. Largely, the requirements for in home care are consistent with the clinic setting.

Patients, family members or companions will be screened before the physiotherapist enters the home. If any of those screened are experiencing symptoms, recommend to the individual contact 811 and the appointment should be rescheduled. All PPE should be donned appropriately before entering the patients home. At the screening call before entering the residence, let the patient know that you have to remove your PPE before leaving the home. All PPE and personal hygiene requirements are as per clinic procedures. All household members should be instructed to maintain social distancing from the care provider during the entire visit.

All clients and household members should wear a mask. A non-medical mask is acceptable. Rare cases where a patient cannot wear a mask must be evaluated carefully by the physiotherapist. All reusable equipment must be cleaned and disinfected as per Health Canada's guidelines.

Business/Employer Settings

The physiotherapist must be aware and follow all social distancing and personal protective measures in addition to the protocols of the particular organization/site. Physiotherapists working in the public sector and residential care sector will be provided guidance.

This guidance is fluid in nature and changes could be made daily. All clinicians and business owners are responsible to exercise their best clinical judgement and do risk assessments frequently. Physiotherapists must stay informed of the current public health recommendations and orders from the CMOH.

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/>

[https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)-outbreak](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)-outbreak)

<https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2820%2931142-9>

We recognize that things are changing rapidly, and these changes are stressful to all our members. The NLCP is committed to help lead you to the most current information and provide guidance during this time.

This document is a guidance document and may change overtime as evidence and the epidemiological data evolve. This document was developed with guidance from Public Health and reviewing documents from the other regulated professional organizations.