

Return to Practice Guidance

Summary of changes- December 10, 2020

This document has been updated to reflect the following changes:

- Whom to contact if you have questions about this guidance.
- Updated information on self-monitoring and what to do if you encounter a confirmed case of COVID-19.
- Note that staff common areas should be cleaned frequently.
- Further clarification on patient/client screening.

The College developed the following guidance for kinesiologists to consider as Ontario begins re-opening businesses and resuming health services. The College will continue to develop and update guidance as we receive questions and as more information becomes available. If you have specific questions after reading this guidance, please email Danielle Lawrence, Practice Advisor and Policy Lead, at danielle.lawrence@coko.ca.

Guiding principles

- Kinesiologists need to use their professional judgement to determine when they feel safe returning to practice. The College does not expect kinesiologists to return to practice if they are not prepared or if they feel it is not safe for them and their patients/clients.
- Kinesiologists must follow all directions provided by Ontario's [Chief Medical Officer of Health \(CMOH\)](#), the Ontario [Ministry of Health's guidance for the health sector](#) and [workplace safety guidelines](#). **Direction or guidance from the Ministry of Health and CMOH overrules anything that may be in this document.**
- The College's guidance should be followed in conjunction with any other guidance provided by employers, if applicable.
- Services that can be safely and effectively provided virtually should be. [View the College's guidance on virtual care](#).
- In-person services must only proceed when the anticipated benefits of such services outweigh the risks of infection to the patient/client and the kinesiologist.

Guidance for employers

Employers have a legal duty under Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to take every reasonable action to protect the health and safety of workers. This duty is particularly important in the context of COVID-19, where there is a need to protect workers and the public from contracting the virus.

Employers should carefully review the sector-specific guidelines highlighted below and make reasonable efforts to implement the recommended actions for their particular sector and practice setting.

Guidance is likely to evolve as the pandemic evolves. It is important to refer back to the links below regularly:

- [Ministry of Health guidance for the healthcare sector](#)
- [Sector-specific guidance for employers from the Public Services Health and Safety Association](#)
- [Sector-specific from the Ministry of Labour](#)

Guidance for kinesiologists

The following measures should be implemented by all kinesiologists. Please review each section carefully. Some of these measures apply only to certain settings and must be applied in conjunction with any other guidance provided by employers, the Ministry of Health and the CMOH. This guidance is organized into the following categories:

- [Self-monitoring and potential exposure to COVID-19](#)
- [Hand hygiene](#)
- [Cleaning and disinfecting](#)
- [Booking appointments](#)
- [Preparing your place of employment](#)
- [The appointment](#)
- [Use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#)
- [After the appointment](#)
- [Home and community services](#)

Self-monitoring and potential exposure to COVID-19

- All health professionals should monitor themselves for signs of illness.
- If you are sick, stay home.
- If you start experiencing symptoms while you are at work and if you're not already wearing one, immediately put on a medical/procedure mask and leave work.
- If you have symptoms, think you were exposed to COVID-19, or travelled outside of Canada or from a COVID-19 affected area within or outside of Ontario within the last 14 days, do not go to work, notify your supervisor immediately and complete the [online self-assessment to determine if you should seek testing](#).
- If you become aware of a patient/client who attended your workplace and who later tests positive for COVID-19, you or the appropriate person at your organization are encouraged to contact your [local public health unit](#) for advice on potential exposure and implications for continuation of work.

Hand hygiene

- Kinesiologists must wash their hands before and after each patient/client contact, before putting on personal protective equipment (PPE), after taking off PPE, and after contact with potentially contaminated surfaces.
- Kinesiologists must promote and have sufficient means for frequent and proper hand hygiene for staff and patients/clients. This can be done by washing hands with soap and water, or using an [alcohol-based hand sanitizer](#). Kinesiologists should consider:
 - Setting up handwashing and sanitization stations.
 - Providing signage instructing proper hand washing techniques.
 - Requiring everyone, including staff, patients/clients and visitors, to wash their hands upon arrival.
- Gloves alone are not a substitute to hand hygiene. Hands must be cleaned after removing gloves.

Cleaning and disinfecting

- Cleaning removes visible soiling, while disinfecting uses chemicals to kill germs once a surface is cleaned. A “wipe-twice” method (wipe once to clean, wipe again to disinfect) must be used to both clean and disinfect surfaces.
- Health Canada has approved several [hard-surface disinfectants](#) and [hand sanitizers](#) for use against COVID-19. Use these links to look up the drug identification number (DIN) number of the product you are using or to find an approved product. Follow instructions on the product label to disinfect effectively.
- In addition to routine cleaning, surfaces that come into contact frequently with hands should be cleaned and disinfected regularly and when visibly dirty. Special attention should be paid to commonly touched surfaces such as doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, counters, hand rails, touch screen surfaces, shared materials, equipment, workstations, keypads, etc.
- All equipment used in patient/client contact should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- Clothing and fabric items should be laundered and dried on the highest temperature setting possible. Ensure items are thoroughly dried.
- Develop and implement procedures for increasing the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting high traffic areas, common areas, public washrooms, staff areas and showering facilities.
- Document procedures around cleaning (e.g. frequency and by whom).

Booking appointments

- Service should be provided virtually as much as possible and only if it is safe and effective. Each patient/client is different, and you must assess their unique needs to determine if providing service virtually is appropriate or if they should attend in-person.
- The consent conversation is different. For virtual services, the patient/client must understand how service will be provided, how they will be billed, how their privacy will be protected, and that they can stop the service if it is not proving to be effective. For in-person service, the patient/client must understand the risks associated with attending in-person

(e.g. risk of infection on public transit and at the setting weighed against risk of not receiving in-person service at the clinic).

- When booking appointments, all patients/clients and anyone accompanying the patient/client must be screened over the phone or via email for any symptoms of COVID-19 based on the [most current screening questionnaire from the Ministry of Health](#). A checklist must be developed for this purpose that becomes part of the patient/client record.

For more information, review the following documents:

- [Active and passive screening](#)
- [Patient/client screening guidance document](#)
- [Reference document for COVID-19 symptoms](#)

If patient/client screening reveals risk factors, signs, or symptoms of COVID-19, if possible, in-person services should be deferred, and the patient/client should be referred for testing. If an accompanying visitor screens positive, they should not be permitted to accompany or visit the patient/client pending test results.

- Pending the outcome of active screening, the decision to provide service in-person should be based on risk, both to the patient/client and to you as the practitioner. Conduct a risk assessment for every patient/client to determine the benefits and risks both to you and to them of attending in-person. Public Health Ontario has a [document that walks you through recommended risk assessments](#). If you must provide service to a patient/client with symptoms or who has COVID-19, personal protective equipment (PPE) must be used. See the *Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)* section below for more information.
- Inform patients/clients over the phone or via email of any public health measures you have implemented to protect them and those visiting your place of work.
- Unless the patient/client requires assistance from another person, encourage them to come alone to their appointment. Anyone attending with the patient/client must be screened on arrival at the appointment.
- Given the unique circumstances, patients/clients may request accommodations. Be flexible with these requests when possible and if safe to do so. You and the patient/client should feel comfortable during the appointment.
- Book appointments to allow enough time between patients/clients to help maintain physical distancing and allow for surface and equipment cleaning after each appointment.

Preparing your place of employment

- You should have written protocols or processes in place around the following:
 - Start of day tasks
 - Process for booking appointments and conversations with patients/clients, including documenting informed consent
 - Cleaning schedule with record of who is responsible for cleaning what, frequency of sanitization, etc.
 - End of day tasks (e.g. checking supplies for the next day)

- Place clear, visible signage at all entrances, and create an alert on voicemails and/or your website instructing patients/clients to schedule appointments in advance and prohibiting walk-in/unscheduled visits.
- Place clear, visible signage at all entrances and within the workplace, reminding patients/clients about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, what to do if they feel unwell, and how to protect themselves and others. The Ontario Government has provided signage in English for both [patients](#) and [visitors](#) that can be posted at entrances, and a [poster for within your setting](#). Several [public health units](#) also have similar resources.
- A confidential register of all people entering the setting should be kept to help with contact tracing, if required. This would include people in the clinic who are not patients/clients (e.g. couriers, support persons accompanying patients/clients, etc.). The register should include name and telephone number. This is not an open sign-in book and should be kept and managed privately by staff. This registry should be kept until further notice. Explain to visitors that this information will only be used for contact tracing should someone who visited the setting later be diagnosed with COVID-19, and that visitors can refuse to provide their name and telephone number.
- Alternative solutions to waiting in the practice setting should be considered, such as asking patients/clients to wait in vehicles and texting or calling when it's time for their appointment.
- Set up the waiting area to allow for physical distancing, such as re-arranging furniture and using visual cues such as tape on the floor. Household contacts are not required to separate.
- Products and devices for sale should be displayed behind a barrier or display case.
- Non-essential items should be removed from waiting areas, including magazines, water dispensers, tea/coffee service, toys, remote controls, etc.
- Provide a dedicated, covered and clearly marked receptacle(s) for disposal of masks, gloves, facial tissues, paper towels, etc. Ensure that patients/clients and staff follow protocols for disposing these items.
- Develop an outbreak procedure checklist in the event a patient/client becomes infected after attending your place of practice.

The appointment

- Before each appointment, wash your hands or use an alcohol-based sanitizer.
- When the patient/client arrives and before you begin service, you or another staff member must screen the patient/client and anyone accompanying them to ensure their symptoms have not changed from the pre-booking screening. If upon this second screening the patient/client exhibits signs and symptoms consistent with COVID-19, you must:
 - Establish and maintain a safe physical distance of two metres.
 - Have the patient/client complete hand hygiene.
 - Have the patient/client don PPE (surgical mask), (if available and the patient/client can tolerate wearing one), and complete hand hygiene.
 - Isolate the patient/client from others in the clinic.
 - Explain the concern that they are symptomatic and reschedule the appointment.
 - Advise the patient/client that they should self-isolate and complete the [online self-assessment tool](#) before calling their doctor or Telehealth Ontario.

- Clean and disinfect the practice setting immediately, including all areas the patient/client may have touched.
- Ensure a record is kept of all close contacts of the symptomatic patient/client and other visitors and staff in the clinic at the time of the visit. This information will be necessary for contact tracing if the patient/client later tests positive for COVID-19.
- You must contact your [local public health unit](#) to report any probable and confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- Require patients/clients to wash their hands or to use an alcohol-based sanitizer before and after the appointment.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- Kinesiologists must follow the latest advice from the Ontario Government on the use of PPE. Some sectors, such as hospitals and long-term care homes, have been issued specific guidance around the use of PPE.
- **If providing service in-person to a patient/client who screens negative and physical distancing (i.e. two metres) cannot be maintained:** Kinesiologists must wear a surgical/procedure mask.
- **If providing service in-person to a patient/client who screens negative and physical distancing can be maintained:** Kinesiologists are encouraged to wear a surgical/procedure mask.
- **If providing service to a patient/client who screens positive and/or who has respiratory symptoms:** Kinesiologists must use PPE. This may include a surgical/procedure mask, isolation gown, gloves, eye protection (goggles or face shield). Public Health Ontario has a document that provides [recommendations on the use of PPE for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases](#).
- Ensure that you are following [protocols around putting on and taking off PPE](#).
- Patients/clients should be advised to wear a mask (cloth or other) to the appointment if they have one.

After the appointment

- After each appointment, you must wash your hands or use an alcohol-based sanitizer.
- Ensure that you clean and disinfect anything used during the appointment by you and the patient/client including door handles, washrooms, change rooms, etc.

Home and community services

Kinesiologists who provide in-person, home-based services must use their professional judgement given that service delivery will take place in an environment outside of their control. [View the Ministry of Health's guidance for home and community care providers](#).