

Workplace Sanitary Standards Guide for
the Therapeutic Care Sector – COVID-19

OHS is everyone's business!



The purpose of this guide is to support businesses in the therapeutic care sector (medical, physiotherapy, osteopathy, occupational therapy, chiropractic, massage therapy, psychology, optometry clinics....) for management of OHS in their work environment. It seeks to guarantee that operations can resume or continue under the safest and healthiest possible conditions in the context of COVID-19.*

In a crisis period, it is important that workers, employers and other players in the workplace collaborate to have healthy and safe work environments for all! Dialogue and cooperation are essential to achieve this.

* Note that professional orders in the therapeutic care sector may have provided you with good practices regarding prevention of COVID-19 in your work environments. It would also be important to apply them.



Management of occupational health and safety

Management means implementing the necessary measures to honour the employer's legal obligations, namely identify, correct and control the risks and encourage the workers' participation in this preventive approach.

Good cooperation between the employer and the staff is essential to encourage management of OHS.



The employer must **proceed with identification of the risks of transmission of COVID-19 in the work environment**. If the risks of contamination cannot be eliminated, the employer must seek to reduce and control them. The employer must identify the tasks during which workers may be exposed to the virus. The suppliers, subcontractors, partners and clients have been informed of the preventive measures implemented in the clinic to reduce and control the risks associated with COVID-19 and made aware of the importance of complying with these measures.

The preventive measures that may be applied are based on the principles of exclusion of symptomatic persons from the workplace, physical distancing, hand washing, respiratory etiquette and maintenance of hygiene measures for the tools, equipment and frequently touched surfaces.

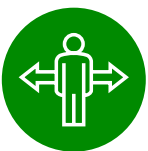
The COVID-19 context can be a major stress factor, whether for the employer or for the workers, suppliers, subcontractors, partners and clients, due to the upheaval it causes in the different spheres of society. Special attention must therefore be paid to the psychosocial health of personnel.



Exclusion of symptomatic workers from the workplace

Persons exhibiting symptoms are part of the COVID-19 transmission chain in the workplace. Procedures accounting for the following factors can avoid transmission of the disease:

- The workers are informed that in case of symptoms of cough or fever, difficulty breathing, sudden loss of smell or taste without nasal congestion or any other symptom associated with COVID-19, they must not report to work;
- Identification of workers with COVID-19 symptoms before they enter the workplace, by means such as:
 - a questionnaire,
 - self-evaluation by the workers;
- Isolation in a room of a worker who starts feeling symptoms in the workplace, wearing a procedure mask and reporting to 1-877-644-4545.
- When making an appointment, if applicable, the client is told not to show up if he/she has symptoms and validation is done with the client upon arrival;
- The suppliers, subcontractors, partners and clients have been informed of the preventive measures implemented in the business to reduce and control the risks associated with COVID-19 and make them aware of the importance of complying with these measures.



Physical distancing

- Whenever possible, a minimum of 2 metres of distancing between people must be maintained at work, from arrival to departure;
- This distance must also be maintained during breaks and lunch hour;
- Handshakes and hugs must be avoided;
- When there are several workstations in the same area, increasing the space between workstations (e.g. treatment spaces, reception) or elimination of one out of two workstations could allow this distance to be maintained.

Adjustments that must be made to limit the risk of transmission when the principles of physical distancing cannot be respected:

- Use of technological means (for example, consider telework for administrative tasks);
- Installation of physical barriers (full partitions) between different workstations that are too close to each other (e.g. treatment spaces) or that cannot be spaced;
- Installation of physical barriers (transparent full partitions) between the personnel and the clients at reception, for example;
- Organization of work methods. For example:
 - prefer teams that are as small and stable as possible,
 - reduce the number of workers by dividing the teams and the shifts, and reduce job rotation,
 - if applicable, do not hold meetings that require a physical gathering,
 - avoid sharing objects (e.g. pencils, documents, computer workstations),
 - limit the number of clients in the clinic, and especially in the waiting room, by encouraging appointments, waiting in vehicles or waiting outdoors if space allows and asking the client to come alone, if possible,
 - install a poster at the business entrance with all the useful information for the client (instructions, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette rules),
 - ask the clients to deposit their coats in the coatroom themselves,
 - make a sink available to the clients to wash their hands upon arrival, if possible, or bottles of hydroalcoholic solution of at least 60%,
 - deploy signage (e.g. floor marking) to establish 2 metres of physical distancing at reception, if applicable,
 - prefer contactless payment (e.g. bank card or contactless terminals) to prevent clients from touching the terminals;
- Because of the services provided in proximity to people:
 - Personal protective equipment adapted to the risk is supplied [procedure mask and protective eyewear (protective glasses or visor covering the face down to the chin)] for personnel who perform a task requiring them to be within 2 metres of another person and in the absence of physical barriers; an overgarment (smock or gown) is supplied when the tasks require physical contact and proximity to the client. This overgarment is changed, safely, between each patient.



Hand washing

Frequent hand washing with lukewarm water and soap or with a 60% hydroalcoholic solution for at least 20 seconds limits the risks of transmission in the work environment, particularly:

- before touching the face (eyes, nose, mouth);
- after coughing, sneezing or wiping the nose;
- before and after eating;
- after handling something that is frequently touched (e.g. cash, material and equipment) or a package received;
- before and after each client;
- after physical contact with a client;
- before wearing personal protective equipment and after its removal.



Respiratory etiquette

Respecting respiratory etiquette consists of:

- covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, and using tissues or the crook of your elbow;
- using single-use tissues;
- immediately discarding used tissues in the trash can;
- not touching your mouth or eyes with your gloved or bare hands.



Maintenance of hygiene measures for tools, equipment and frequently touched surfaces

Given that the virus responsible for COVID-19 can live on surfaces, application of hygiene measures is essential.

- Ensure efficient operation and maintenance of the ventilation systems, according to the regulatory requirements for the type of facility and the tasks performed;
- Remove non-essential objects (magazines, newspapers and knickknacks) from the common areas;
- Clean the sanitary facilities at least every shift and disinfect them daily;
- Clean the meal areas before each meal and disinfect them daily. For example:
 - table,
 - chairs,
 - refrigerator door handle,
 - microwaves;

- Clean and disinfect the frequently touched surfaces at least every shift and when they are visibly soiled. For example:
 - locker rooms,
 - employee lounge,
 - tables,
 - counters,
 - doorknobs,
 - telephones;
- At the workstation and in the waiting room, disinfect the surfaces, equipment and material that have been in contact with the clients, between clients or when they must be shared (e.g. payment terminals, chairs, tables, clinical material and equipment);
- If applicable, remove personal protective equipment safely and discard non-reusable PPE in the trash can or in reclosable bags reserved for this purpose;
- Clean and disinfect reusable equipment (e.g. protective eyewear) with a product adapted to the equipment;
- Use the appropriate cleaning products or disinfectants (see the manufacturer’s recommendations and do not mix cleansers);
- During cleaning and disinfection, wear leakproof gloves to protect the hands when the cleaning product specifications recommend it;
- Wash washable material (e.g. towels, sheets, coverings, bathrobes) after each use with the usual laundry soap;
- Wash reusable overgarments (smocks, gowns), if applicable, with the usual laundry soap;
- At the end of the shift, remove the work clothes and place them in a bag to wash them with the usual laundry soap.

Resources are available online for more information concerning [cleaning of surfaces](#) or the [recommended disinfectants](#).



Legal obligations

Legal obligations with respect to occupational health and safety, for both the employer and for workers, must be applied in the context of COVID-19. They are summarized below.

Employer

The employer has an obligation to protect the health, safety and physical well-being of their workers. *The Act respecting occupational health and safety* (AOHS) stipulates that the employer must take all the necessary measures to do so ([section 51](#)). This includes using methods to identify, correct and control risks.

In the context of COVID-19, the employer must ensure that the usual preventive measures are still appropriate. If not, they must modify them to protect workers against the risk of contamination.

The employer must also inform them about the risks associated with their work, including those associated with COVID-19. They must also provide workers with appropriate training, assistance and supervision so that everyone has the skill and knowledge required to safely perform the work assigned to them.

Worker

Every worker has an obligation to take the necessary measures to protect their health, safety or physical well-being and to ensure that they do not endanger the health, safety or physical well-being of other people in the workplace ([section 49](#) of the AOHS). To do this, they must follow the rules and measures put in place in the context of COVID-19, just as they follow the other rules applied in the workplace. Workers must also participate in identifying and eliminating risks. If they see risks or have suggestions in this regard, they must inform the health and safety committee (if there is one), their superior or a representative of the employer.

Acknowledgments:

- Institut national de santé publique du Québec
- Association paritaire pour la santé et la sécurité du travail du secteur affaires sociales
- Office des professions du Québec
- Association québécoise des ergothérapeutes en pratique privée
- Ordre des ergothérapeutes du Québec
- Ordre des physiothérapeutes du Québec
- Association québécoise de la physiothérapie
- Ordre des chiropraticiens du Québec
- Association des chiropraticiens du Québec
- Ordre des acupuncteurs du Québec
- Soins personnels Québec
- Association des massothérapeutes du Québec (AMQ®)
- Réseau des massothérapeutes professionnels du Québec
- Fédération québécoise des massothérapeutes
- Regroupement des intervenants et thérapeutes en médecine alternative (R.I.T.M.A. inc.)

The guide and the kit result from a reflective process intended to support the work environments in management of occupational health and safety in the context of COVID-19. The project is scalable and will harmonize with the preventive measures order by the Direction de la santé publique (public health authorities).

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