

## Recommended Best Practices for Massage Therapy

Updated June 19, 2020

The following requirements found in the most recently issued Directed Health Measures (DHM) must be followed at all times if a massage therapy facility is to reopen.

Each DHM can be accessed at <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/COVID-19-Directed-Health-Measures.aspx>

- All clients and staff **MUST** wear facemasks at all times on-site.
- Massage therapy facilities must adhere to the current Directed Health Measure requirements for beauty/nail salons, barber shops, massage therapy services, tattoo parlors/body art facilities for facility patron limits.

In addition to the requirements found in the DHM as outlined above, massage therapy facilities are asked to adhere to the following guidelines developed in partnership between the Division of Public Health, the Department of Economic Development, the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA), Nebraska Chapter and the Get Nebraska Growing Task Force. *Refer to your local DHM, in some areas an exception regarding masks has been made for services on the face provided by staff. Patrons are permitted to remove their mask while receiving services directly. The mask must be worn by the patron at all other times while on the premises.*

### Staff

- Stagger shifts to comply with DHM and reduce the number of persons in the shop.
- Whenever possible, practice social distancing between staff. Redesign workflow, designate tasks and workstations to specific employees or contact pods to minimize comingling and maximize social distancing.
- Enhance employee safety training, emphasizing hygiene etiquette (avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth), and proper hand hygiene including washing hands for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after any sneezing or coughing, or after touching high touch surfaces (e.g., door handles, chairs, and tables).
- Complete employee pre-screening (e.g., take temperature and assess for any symptoms consistent with COVID-19) prior to starting work.
- Consider using stickers after fever check and a confidential symptoms log. Communicate daily with staff that they must immediately inform a manager if they feel sick or experience any symptoms, including, but not limited to: onset of fever, cough, or shortness of breath.
- Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 (either lab-confirmed or clinical diagnosis) should notify their supervisor prior to the start of their work shift. The employer should consult with their [local health department](#) to assess whether there was an exposure to the family member at home (example: if the individual takes care of the sick family member) or if there is no exposure (example: individual resides in a separate room and bathroom) before determining if it is appropriate to come into work or needs to self-quarantine. Continue to monitor employee health during their shift for COVID-19 [symptoms](#) (including, but not limited to: fever, cough, shortness of breath). If an employee becomes sick at work, send them home immediately and then clean and disinfect surfaces in their workplace. Other employees and customers at the facility with close contact (within 6 feet) of the sick employee during this time should be considered exposed. Instruct sick employees to stay home and follow the CDC's [What to Do If You Are Sick](#) precautions and consult with their local health department on additional guidance.
- Create a [response plan](#) for any instance of an employee with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. If needed, consult your [local health department](#) for additional guidance.

- Staff should consider bringing a change of clothes to change into after the shift.
- Staff should keep cell phones away or in a central location, with disinfecting wipes available. Disinfect the cell phone after use.

## Facility

- Customer tables and chairs should be at least six feet apart. Refer to your local DHM, as physical distancing may be mandated.
- Remove items that cannot be disinfected from the lobby, such as magazines, stylebooks, etc.
- Do not allow additional guests. No friends or family, with the exception that one parent or guardian may be present if a minor is receiving a procedure.
- Disinfect workstations (including chairs, tables, electrical appliances and cords, etc.) and all items that contact the customer before each new customer. Clean, sterilize and disinfect all non-disposable implements after each use.
- Discard and replace products that have been used, or that have been contaminated after improper or unsanitary use.
- Disinfect frequently touched objects at a minimum of every four hours, e.g., doorknobs, gates and counters.
- Massage therapists and clients must wash hands prior to each procedure, for at least 20 seconds.
- Staff must change disposable gloves between each client.
- Clean doors and wipe down door windows every 30 minutes inside and outside of salon.
- Provide hand sanitizer dispenser inside the front door for clients.
- Where possible, utilize front and rear doorways to establish one-way traffic flow through the facility.
- Stagger delivery schedules
- Ensure your facility has proper ventilation. Adjust your HVAC setting to circulate fresh air coming in to your workspace.
- Create signs/posters advising of new policies.

## Customers

- Encourage appointments to be made online or by phone; discourage walk-ins. If able, utilize advance payment online, contactless payment, cards and gift cards over cash. Staff should wipe POS surfaces with disinfectant between each use.
- Customers should wait outside in the car prior to being called in for the appointment, or wait in line six feet apart in front of the shop.
- If lobby area is needed, add signage or tape markings to designate where customers can stand or sit; reduce quantity of chairs in the lobby or increase space between chairs; wipe down lobby chairs every 30 minutes; remove toys, games, TV remotes, promotional materials, beverages and coffee machines; and remove sign-in sheets.
- Discourage customers from bringing in personal items (purses, jackets, etc.).

AMTA-Nebraska Chapter and National Association provide the following additional guidelines. **Note: guidelines below do not supersede State of Nebraska Directed Health Measure requirements.**

## AMTA Nebraska Chapter Guidelines

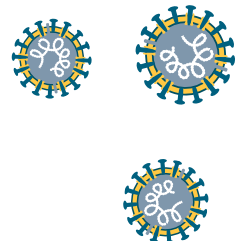
Continue to follow all state regulations and assume standard protocols and precautions. Hygiene protocols remain standard. Refresh yourself and employees with state regulations (visit <http://dhhs.ne.gov/licensure/Pages/Massage-Therapy.aspx>). Gain a full understanding of new laws and ordinances at the local, state and national levels, and adjust your practices accordingly, following CDC and OSHA guidelines (Appendix A, B). Note that the following are best practice guidelines intended to help ensure safety for massage therapists and clients.

## Therapist Protection Measures

- Appointments only, no walk-ins.
- No clients waiting in the waiting room, unless social distancing can be maintained; clients must wait in the car until the therapist is ready.
- Limit the number of people in the establishment to one person per therapist.
- Employees will wear facemasks and sanitize their hands upon entry/exit of treatment room.
  - Consider wearing glasses or protective eyewear.
  - Consider aprons or changing clothing between clients.
  - Consider changing shoes at the entry/exit of the facility.
- Clients will wash/sanitize hands upon entry/exit of the facility.
- Expanded intake and consent form to include questions about COVID19:
  - Prior to appointment or upon entry to the facility:
    - ◆ Have you been exposed? Have you traveled recently? Have you been ill?
  - Clients sign a waiver acknowledging they understand the contagious nature of COVID-19, the possibility of exposure to COVID-19, and that they do not hold the business/facility/therapist responsible.
  - Evaluate cancelation policy and protocols if a client needs to cancel due to COVID-19 signs, symptoms or exposure.
- Employees will take their temperatures before starting each work day. Temperatures of 100.4°F should be considered a sign of possible COVID-19 infection.
- Evaluate the normal scope of cleaning/sanitizing; expand if necessary.
  - Use products with nonpermeable barriers, like mattress pads, to cover your table, table warmers, etc.
  - Perform sanitation more often, and ensure you hit every surface between every client.
  - Ensure all equipment, chairs and tables used by employees will be sanitized between clients.
  - Complete turn-out of linens after every treatment.
  - Consider emptying trash between each client.
  - Consider UVC lamps and HEPA filters for additional sanitizing.
  - Spread scheduling out to allot enough time for expanded sanitation and the staggering of clients.
  - Evaluate laundry procedures, especially for off-site laundry.
  - Sanitize incoming stock and merchandise.
- Clients should wear masks when entering/exiting the facility, during intake and when side lying or supine.
  - Consider a ready-made disposable face cradle cover for your face cradle; top it with a pillowcase, leaving a large hammock-type pocket underneath that could catch client aerosols when they are prone.
- Minimize contact during check-in/check-out contact.
  - Encourage contactless payment.
  - Post signage in waiting rooms and common areas to emphasize social distancing and updated protocols.

## Communicating to Employees

- Owner will meet with all employees and communicate measures verbally and in writing.
- Nebraska Massage Therapy must post current regulation changes on its website.
- Each organization should post the latest regulation changes.





## Client Protection Measures

- No employee with a fever or any other symptoms of COVID-19 can provide services to clients.
- Only one client per Licensed Massage Therapist.
- No persons will be allowed to sit in the waiting area.
- Only one client and therapist should be admitted to each treatment room at any time.
- Therapists will wear protective face masks.
- All equipment, chairs, and tables used by an employee and clients will be sanitized between clients.
- Provide hand washing/sanitizer clients upon arrival.
- Clients should wear masks when entering/exiting the facility, during intake and when side lying or supine.

## Communicating to Clients

- Post updated protocols on social media, websites and other electronic client communications.
- Communicate updated protocols when an appointment is scheduled.
- Post updated protocols at the entry to facility, as well as in common areas and treatment rooms.

## Summary

Generally, the risk of contamination is considerably mitigated by following standard cleaning and sanitization practices. Modifying scheduling practices to allow more time between clients allows extra time to more thoroughly clean common areas, and reduces the number of people crossing paths in the common areas.

## National AMTA Guidelines

Knowing that every state will restart in its own way and will likely provide varying specifics for how and when you can begin to practice, here are 10 important considerations:

1. Gain a full understanding of any new laws and ordinances at the local, state and national levels, and adjust your practices accordingly.
2. Institute thorough cleaning, disinfecting and sanitizing protocols in your massage room as well as any communal areas, and of any objects that clients touch.
3. Consider the laundry policy for your clothes, linens, towels and other washable objects.
4. Think about your own use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (including masks, gloves and clothing).
5. Practice proper handwashing and hygiene protocols.
6. Consider your booking practices; make any changes to allow for sanitization procedures and recognizing social distancing recommendations that may limit the number of people in one space. Evaluate your cancellation policy and protocols if a client shows signs of illness.
7. Implement an enhanced intake process and demonstrate your commitment to the health of your clients and yourself.
8. Minimize contact during check-ins and check-out (make use of virtual tools).
9. If you work with other massage therapists or service providers, consider any necessary updates to your HR and staffing policies. If you are an employee, carefully review any guidelines you will need to follow.
10. Post signage in waiting rooms and common areas to emphasize social distancing, handwashing and any protective equipment you expect your clients to use. We encourage every massage therapist to use their best professional judgment about their ability to accept and care for clients in a way that follows their state, CDC and OSHA guidelines. We are working to get more concrete answers from healthcare experts, governments and massage therapy licensing boards, and will be providing you with resources for protecting both yourself and your clients.