COVID-19 Health Alert for Massage Therapists

Massage therapists should be aware that there is:

- Widespread person-to-person transmission of COVID-19 in Washington. People with COVID-19 can spread the illness even when they feel or look well.
- High risk of severe COVID-19 illness in persons older than 60 years.
- High risk of severe COVID-19 illness in persons with underlying health conditions.
- No method to completely remove the risk of person-to-person spread of COVID-19 in a massage setting.

Governor Inslee’s proclamation 20-25 allows health care providers to continue essential health services. Many services provided by massage therapists are considered non-essential. No in-person appointment is risk-free, even if the patient and massage therapist appear well. To help control the spread of COVID-19, treatment should be limited to patients with a clear and documented urgent medical need.

While the proclamation allows massage therapists to continue providing services, they are not required to do so. Therapists should weigh their own health risk and comfort when deciding whether to continue in-person services.

Actions requested:

- Only provide massage to patients with urgent medical issues. Examples include, but are not limited to, lymphatic drainage issues, moderate to severe whiplash, and acute pain control. Simply having a prescription for massage is not sufficient to establish urgent care.
- Cancel non-urgent massage appointments.
- When treatment is medically necessary, screen the patient for symptoms of respiratory illness (e.g., fever, cough, difficulty breathing) before they enter your practice. If a patient has respiratory symptoms, do not provide treatment. Instead, refer the patient to their primary care provider.
- When appropriate, consider instructing patients to implement self-care measures such as rest, hydration, light stretching, light or moderate activity, and self-massage to treat aches and pains until the restrictions on non-essential services are lifted.
- Make sure patients practice social distancing of six feet in waiting rooms and other areas of the practice.
- Closely follow CDC guidelines for hand hygiene and clean equipment and facilities between patients.
- Remind sick employees to stay home. Do not require them to work. Allow all employees who are uncomfortable with continuing to work in the clinic to stay home.
- Consider wearing a face mask or cloth face covering when providing massage and when within six feet of another person. Provide face covers and request use by clients when close proximity is necessary.
**Background:**
The virus causing coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19), emerged in December 2019 and has since spread around the world causing a global pandemic. Eighty percent of cases are mild, but severe disease and deaths are more common in the elderly (older than 60 years) and in those with underlying health conditions. Health experts are concerned that increasing transmission in our state and an increase in severe disease will limit the ability of our healthcare system to provide urgent care to all who require it.

**Additional resources for massage therapists:**
- DOH Workplace Recommendations
- DOH Coronavirus (COVID-19) Web Page
- CDC Coronavirus (COVID-19) Web Page
- CDC Practice Preparedness Resources

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