



RETURN TO PRACTICE

Preliminary
Guidance for the Safe Return to
Face to Face appointments for
Soft Tissue Therapists

May 2020

Contents

Introduction	2
General Health	3
Therapists	3
Clients	3
Track and Trace App/ Trace Contactors.....	3
Clinic Cleanliness.....	3
Use of Face Coverings	4
Hand Washing / Hand Sanitiser	4
Additional Controls for Multiple Room Clinic Settings	4
Additional Controls for Home Visits	5
Additional Controls for Home Clinics.....	5
Comfort of Client and Therapist During Treatment.....	5
Treatments.....	5
Hot Stone Treatments	5
Acupuncture Treatments	6
Taping and Strapping.....	6
Payments	6
Treating of Children and Clients in the 'At Risk' Group	6
Consumables, Coverings and Towels.....	6

Introduction

This document outlines the return to work guidelines for Soft Tissue Therapists following the COVID-19 outbreak. This will be supported by a Risk Assessment Document.

Some assumptions have been made

The earliest predicted start date is July 4th, 2020 during 'STEP 3' in the Government's "adjustments to the social distancing measures".

The Government Guidance for 'STEP 3' shall be attached to this document late June/ early July as soon as it is published

In early July the COVID-19 Alert Level is likely to be at Level 3 going towards Level 2 and the R (rate of transmission) is less than 1

Level 3	A COVID-19 epidemic is in general circulation	Gradual relaxing of social distancing measures.
Level 2	COVID 19 is present in the UK but the level of transmission is low.	No or minimal social distancing measures; enhanced testing, tracing, monitoring and screening.

Source: UK Government

As the virus is still in circulation within the UK, but at a much lower risk, Soft Tissue Therapists will need to take additional precautions whilst conducting their work, to reduce the risk of any spread, and to look after their own welfare, and the welfare of their clients in line with government guidance.

Main Symptoms of COVID-19

Most people with coronavirus have at least one of these symptoms

- **high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- **new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- **loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

More information can be found here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/check-if-you-have-coronavirus-symptoms/>

Insurance

Before re-starting work ensure your insurance is valid and will cover you for eventualities related to Covid-19

General Health

Therapists

If you or any member of your household has symptoms of COVID-19, you shall self-isolate, along with all household members, and arrange testing to be conducted. You must cancel all appointments until test results have been confirmed.

Clients

When making the appointment, you shall ask the Client if they, or any member of their household, has symptoms of Covid-19 or whether they or any of their household had been advised to self-isolate.

If the answer is yes to any of the above, then treatment cannot commence until an isolation period in line with government guidance has been completed and the client confirms they are symptom free.

Before the client enters your premises for their appointment you shall ask them if they, or any member of their household, have any symptoms of COVID-19. If they answer yes, then all treatment shall be cancelled until a period of isolation has taken place in line with government guidelines.

Although not possible during hands-on treatment, at other times every effort shall be made to maintain social distancing; (consultation process, note taking, exercise advice for example).

If the Client cancels because they are unwell, any cancellation fee shall be waived.

NOTE: It is likely that a signed declaration between the Client and Therapist will be required before the treatment to confirm that both parties are COVID19 symptom free. More details will follow.

Track and Trace App / Trace Contactors

It is recommended that all Soft Tissue Therapists download the government approved Track and Trace App, in addition all members of their household should also comply with this. If the App identifies that you need to self-isolate, all treatments shall cease, and you and your household shall go into self-isolation and seek a test in line with government guidelines.

If anyone in your household has been identified as having to self-isolate, via the Trace Contactors, all treatments shall cease, and you and your household shall go into self-isolation and seek a test in line with government guidelines.

When the Client makes the appointment, you shall request that the Client downloads the Track and Trace App, if they have not already done so, and follow the protocols identified above for them and their household.

Clinic Cleanliness

No unnecessary 'clutter' shall be present on surfaces within the clinic. For example, towels, tape and couch roll and exercise equipment shall not be stored openly. Items to be placed in storage cupboards, plastic containers or removed from the treatment room.

Towels and couch cover shall be changed and washed between each client. If these cannot be washed immediately, they must be placed either in a sealed plastic bag or storage box and marked (Dirty Do Not Use).

The couch shall be wiped clean using an anti-bacterial product between each Client even if a couch cover has been used.

Alternatively, the Therapist could choose not to use a couch cover, however, this will lead to a shorter life of the outer couch fabric and if it's a two or three sectioned couch it will be more difficult to clean down after use.

A gap of 30 minutes between each client shall be observed and, during this time a window and the door in the treatment room shall be opened to improve air flow, thus reducing the risk of any residual airborne contamination being present.

Between each client all door handles on the access/egress route, handrail (if stairs are used), window latch and massage lotion container shall be wiped clean using an anti-bacterial cleaner.

Air conditioning units and fans shall not be used during treatments.

The floor of the clinic shall be cleaned at the end of the working day.

Use of Face Coverings

The Client shall be met outside the Clinic, the Client and Therapist shall sanitise their hands and don face covering before entry into the premises.

It is recommended that the Therapist keeps their face covering on until the towels and couch cover have been removed, bagged or placed in washing machine and the treatment room has been wiped down and ventilated.

You must avoid touching your face and face covering. Before removing your face covering hands shall be washed or hand sanitiser used.

If it's a single use face covering it shall be safely disposed.

Hand Washing / Hand Sanitiser

Before the Client arrives, the therapist shall wash hands. When the Client arrives, they shall sanitise their hands prior to entering the premises. The Therapist shall again wash or sanitise their hands directly before starting the Treatment.

When the Client leaves both parties shall either wash or use hand sanitiser on their hands.

Before removing face coverings, hand sanitising or hand washing shall be conducted.

SEE ALSO TAPING AND STRAPPING

SEE ALSO CLEANLINESS OF CLINIC

Additional Controls for Multiple Room Clinic Settings

When making bookings, you must avoid appointments that 'cross over', thus reducing social distancing issues and potential cross contamination.

Keep the front door locked to prevent clients, or other members of the public from entering your premises before you have performed your pre-treatment checks.

Open internal doors of clinic to improve airflows with the exception of Fire Doors (unless they have approved self-closers synchronised with the fire alarm) and Treatment Rooms.

Additional Controls for Home Visits

Prior to entering the premises, the Therapist shall confirm with the Client that they and any members of their household have no signs of COVID-19. The bare minimum amount of equipment shall be brought into the Client's house. This includes removing the treatment couch cover before entering the premises.

The Therapist shall sanitise their hands and don their face covering before entry. The Client shall don their face covering before the Therapist enters their location.

The Client shall ensure that all internal doors are closed to prevent other household members from meeting the Therapist. The Client shall open/close doors for the Therapist.

Following the treatment, the therapist shall place any towels and the couch cover into a plastic bag, such as a bin bag. This is to be tied once all items are placed within it, these are to be washed at the earliest opportunity.

The therapist shall exit the Client's premises without touching any doors, these are to be opened and closed by the client escorting the therapist out. Once outside the Therapist shall wipe down their couch using antibacterial cleaner and sanitise their hands before putting it back in their couch case and removing their face cover.

Additional Controls for Home Clinics

Prior to entering the premises, the Therapist shall confirm with the Client that they and any members of their household have no signs of COVID-19. Both Client and Therapist shall sanitise hands and don covering before entering the premises. The Therapist shall be the only person to open doors and escort the client to the treatment room.

Other members of the household shall not mix with the Client and must be instructed to stay clear whilst clients are moving between the treatment room and the entry exit door.

Comfort of Client and Therapist During Treatment

If the Therapist or Client feels uncomfortable with the precautions taken, or wearing the face covering during treatment, the treatment shall cease. However, the protocols shall still be observed, ie hand sanitising and face covering.

If the Client is required to lay in the prone position, ensure they are comfortable with their face covering. If they are wearing a 'medical mask' caution should be taken with the metal strip as this could cause an injury to the bridge of the nose.

Treatments

Hot Stone Treatments

Although the stones are warmed and cleaned between each client, it is recommended that these treatments are not re-started at present as the stones can be porous and the vapour generated by the hot water will cause unknown issues with any COVID19 present.

Acupuncture / Dry Needling Treatments

Boxes of needles to be stored away until required. Prior to getting the box of needles, the Therapist shall sanitise their hands. Prior to inserting the needle, the Therapist shall clean the area with an alcohol wipe. All other normal acupuncture safe practices shall be observed.

Taping and Strapping

All tape shall be stored away. Before applying any tape, the therapist shall wash or sanitise their hands. The tape shall be stored away directly after the tape has been cut/applied.

Rehabilitation Equipment

Any Rehabilitation/Exercises Equipment such as bands or weights shall be wiped clean with an antibacterial product. If something is porous such as a yoga block, it shall be wrapped so the outer surface can be cleaned or disposed.

Payment

The client should pay for treatments either by bank transfer, card if possible or payment link. Exchange of cash should be avoided if possible. If cash is transferred, hands shall be washed /sanitised after transaction. If a card machine has been used it shall be wiped down after use.

Treating of Children and Clients in the 'At Risk' Group

As children require a parent or guardian present it is recommended that they are not treated in the initial stage.

People in the 'At Risk' group shall be socially isolating or social distancing, therefore it is recommended not to treat this group in the initial phase.

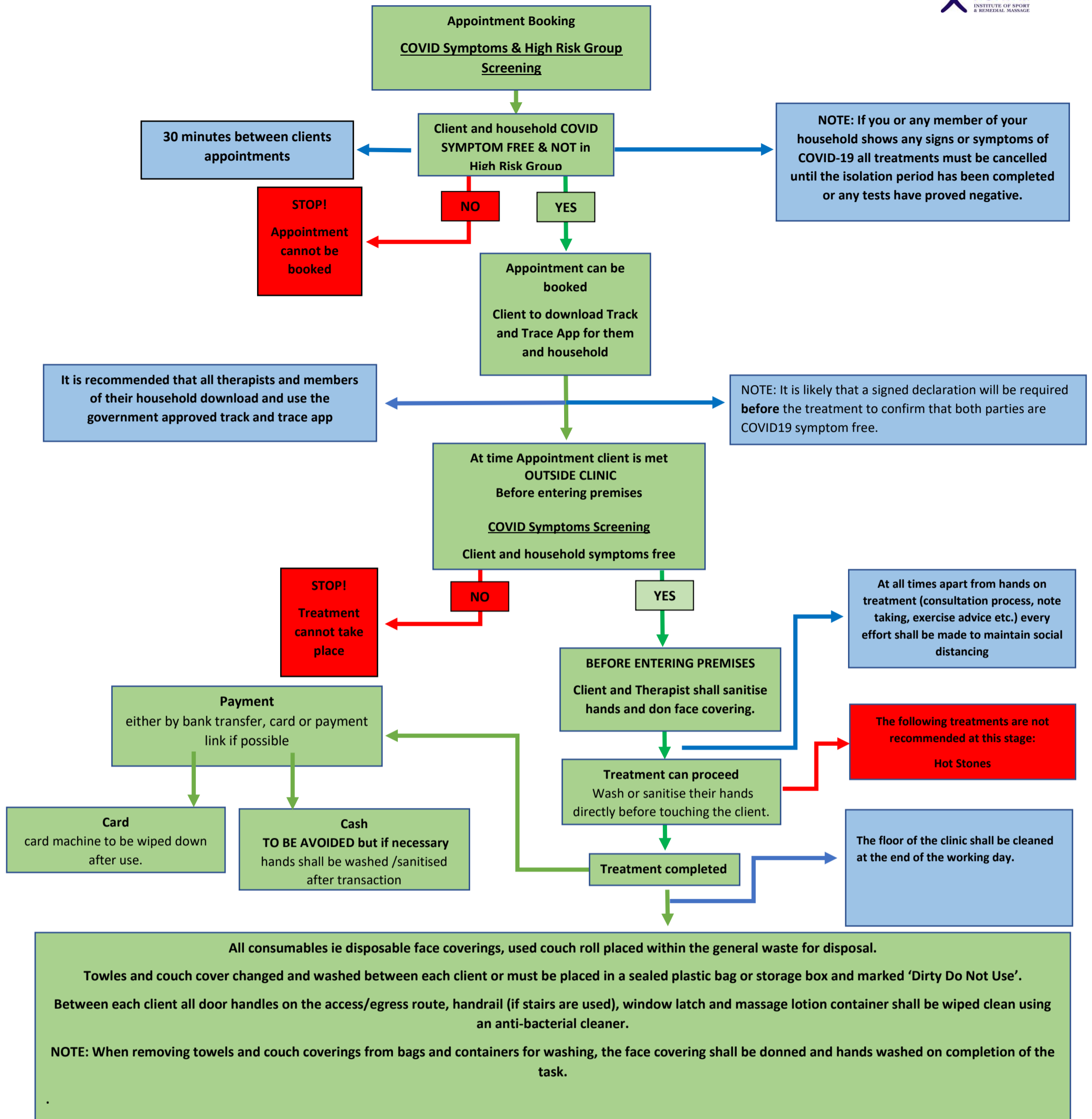
Consumables, coverings and towels

All consumables i.e. disposable face coverings, used couch roll shall be placed within the general waste for disposal.

All couch covers and towels should be washed immediately where possible if not possible they are to be placed within a sealed plastic bag or container and marked '**Dirty Do Not Use**' until washing is carried out.

When removing towels and couch coverings from bags and containers for washing a face covering shall be donned and hands washed on completion of the task.

Preliminary process flow for Face to Face Appointments



Additional Control for Multiple Room Clinic Settings

When making bookings, no 'cross over' appointments.

Keep the front door locked to prevent clients, or other members of the public from entering your premises before you have performed your pre-treatment checks.

Open internal doors of clinic to improve airflows with the exception of Fire Doors (unless they have approved self-closers synchronised with the fire alarm) and Treatment Rooms.

Additional Controls for Home Visits

COVID Symptoms & High Risk Group screening prior to entering the premises for Client and their Household.

The Therapist to sanitise their hands and don their face covering before entry.

The Client shall don their face covering before the Therapist enters their location.

The bare minimum amount of equipment shall be brought into the Client's house. This includes removing the treatment couch cover before entering the premises.

The Client shall ensure that all internal doors are closed to prevent other household members from meeting the Therapist. The Client shall open/close doors for the Therapist.

Following the treatment, the therapist to place all towels and couch cover into a plastic bag which needs to be tied and washed at the earliest opportunity.

The therapist to exit the Client's premises without touching any doors, these are to be opened and closed by the client escorting the therapist out. Once outside the Therapist shall wipe down their couch using antibacterial cleaner and sanitise their hands before putting it back in their couch case and removing their face cover.

Additional Control for Home Clinics

COVID Symptoms & High Risk Group screening prior to entering the premises.

The Therapist shall inform the client that they are in good health also.

Both Client and Therapist shall Sanitise hands and don covering before entering the premises.

The Therapist shall be the only person to open doors and escort the client to the treatment room.

Other members of the Household shall not mix with the Client and must be instructed to stay clear whilst clients are moving between the treatment room and the entry exit door.