

## FAQ's Regarding PT Practice in COVID-19 Pandemic

1. What do I do as an employer if someone who has tested positive for COVID is found to have worked in or attended the clinic?
  - The response of the actual clinic may be different dependent on the circumstances, so should a clinic become aware of a potential exposure, they should contact Public Health by calling Healthline 811. Public Health will work with the employer to determine the response and guide through the process. The process is outlined here: <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-for-businesses-and-workers/covid-19-workplace-toolkit>
  - The Government of Saskatchewan has launched a Business Response Team to better support businesses in the province. For more information, businesses can contact the Business Response Team by calling 1-844-800-8688, emailing [supportforbusiness@gov.sk.ca](mailto:supportforbusiness@gov.sk.ca) or by visiting [Information for Businesses and Workers](#).
  
2. Do patients have to wear masks for physiotherapy services?
  - Mask wearing is mandatory in the Province of Saskatchewan as outlined in the following:  
<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/guidance-on-cloth-and-non-medical-cloth-masks/indoor-mandatory-masking-requirements>
  
3. Do I have the right to refuse care if a patient refuses to wear a mask?

As per legal advice from SCPT legal counsel, Merrilee Rasmussen:

  - Employees have a legislated right to a safe workplace. There is not any legislation that states that patients have a “right” not to wear a mask. Thus, if the employee feels that the patient’s refusal to wear a mask puts them, as the practitioner, in danger, they have the right to refuse care.
  - Masking is now mandatory in all indoor spaces (as noted above). If there is a situation where a client isn’t able for medical reasons to wear a mask, they then are entitled to be accommodated to the point of undue hardship. The definition of undue hardship will depend on specific circumstances, such as the vulnerability of the PT providing the treatment, the nature of the client’s medical issue, the urgency of the treatment required, etc.
  - There is always a risk to mandating anything or refusing care. A client could complain to the College, potentially launch some sort of legal action or, make a public statement via social media platforms. It’s impossible to prevent people from doing these things; but they would not likely be successful with legal action, again depending on the exact circumstances. As for a complaint with the College,

if the College receives a formal complaint, the PCC would be required to investigate it. Again, the exact circumstances would be taken under consideration, as would the above stated legislation.

As per SHA recommendations:

- [Microsoft Word - FAQs - Patients Unwilling or Unable to Wear Mask - FINAL January 21 2021 \(saskhealthauthority.ca\)](#)

4. Do I have to rely on the patient report that they do not have a fever, or can I take their temperature prior to beginning?

- Ideally, the patient would take their own temperature and report it to the clinician prior to attending an appointment, given that if the temperature is taken at the appointment and found to be high, they have already exposed the clinician and facility to the virus if they are carrying it. It is recommended that this takes place as a pre-screening tool prior to the patient entering the facility.
- Given the current Order regarding mandatory self-isolation it is also appropriate and recommended that all patients are taken through a pre-screening questionnaire prior to any face to face treatments: COVID-19 Self-Assessment tool: <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-self-assessment>
- Given that one of the early signs of COVID-19 is a fever, according to Practice Guideline #1 and Standards of Practice Standard # 2 it would be appropriate for a physical therapist to take the patient's temperature as a screening measure, as long as the patient gives informed consent for you to do so. A fever is considered any oral temperature greater than 38°C or 100.4°F. If your patient has a temperature and also reports other symptoms of COVID-19 or a subjective history of travel or potential contact with an individual with COVID-19 then you should inform them to return directly home and follow the public health guidelines related to contacting public health and self-isolation procedures. They should be provided information regarding the COVID-19 Self-Assessment tool and to contact HealthLine at 811 for further guidance regarding their symptoms.
- [https://scpt.org/document/3566/Practice\\_Guideline\\_1\\_Assessment\\_and\\_Analysis.pdf](https://scpt.org/document/3566/Practice_Guideline_1_Assessment_and_Analysis.pdf);
- [Core Standards of Practice - Updated Nov 2020.pdf \(in1touch.org\)](#) (National Standards of Practice document)

5. If a PT begins to have flu-like symptoms, what is the employer's responsibility to staff and the public? What is the PT's responsibility?
- Self-monitoring means paying attention to your health so you can identify signs of sickness. Everyone should be self-monitoring; however, this is even more important for healthcare workers who have an increased risk of coming into contact with the virus. Self-monitoring means watching closely for symptoms in yourself or your dependents including taking your temperature twice daily. You should have a plan on how to quickly self-isolate if you develop fever, cough or difficulty breathing when not at home.
  - **If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 or are aware of being in contact with an individual who has a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19, then you are required to immediately self-isolate** and call HealthLine at 811 for assessment and further direction.
  - **Self-isolation** means staying at home and avoiding situations where there is a potential to spread the infection to others: work; school; sporting events; social, cultural and religious gatherings; and public places such as restaurants and malls. You should also avoid public transportation. If you have an emergency and need to leave home, please wear a surgical mask while you are out.
  - Employers are responsible for ensuring that any employees with symptoms or who have come into contact with an individual with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 be on immediate self-isolation measures.
  - **The Government of Saskatchewan has introduced amendments to The Saskatchewan Employment Act to remove the provision requiring a doctor's note or certificate in order to access leave.** Requesting written verification from physicians or HealthLine 811 is unnecessary. All workplaces and organizations should be implementing their business continuity plans or assessing the risk of exposure and transmission for their staff and clients and make operational decisions accordingly.
  - Public Health Emergency Leave:  
<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/business/employment-standards/job-protected-leaves/public-health-emergency-leave>
    - Employees will be entitled to leave for the length of time they are ordered by their employer, government, their doctor or the chief medical health officer to remain away from work.
    - The Public Health Emergency Leave is an unpaid leave. However, employees are entitled to be paid their regular wages if their employer authorizes them to work from home during the period of time as set out by the order of the chief medical health officer or government.

- Provincial and Federal supports for worker's affected by COVID 19:  
<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-for-businesses-and-workers/support-for-workers>

#### 6. What should a PT do if they are positive on the COVID-19 self-assessment? What should the employer do?

- If you have symptoms and a positive result on the COVID-19 self- assessment tool you should call the Healthline 811 to have your symptoms assessed. **Do not go to an emergency department, family doctor or walk-in clinic unless your symptoms worsen.** Because you have (or had) symptoms, you should **self-isolate** and follow the instructions received from Healthline 811. That means: do not go to any public places, stay at home, and don't have any visitors.
- If you have to be tested for Covid-19, a public health officer will contact you with your results and direct your process. Further information about Covid-19 testing can be found at: <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/testing-information>
- The process on the date of compilation of these FAQs was:
  - Positive Tests
    - If symptoms worsen, seek care or call Healthline 811 for direction
    - Continue self-isolation until such time as a Medical Health Officer/Public Health Officer determines they no longer pose a public health threat.
  - Negative Tests
    - Follow instructions with respect to self-isolation provided by Public Health when they call to inform you about your negative test results.
    - If symptoms worsen, seek care or call Healthline 811; repeat testing if recommended by Healthline 811
    - If you are a healthcare worker – repeat testing if test performed < 48 hours after symptom onset

#### 7. Does Self-Isolation apply to healthcare workers?

- In accordance with the current Order from the Government of Saskatchewan:
  - All persons that have traveled internationally shall go into mandatory self-isolation for 14 days from date of arrival back into Canada, except for the following persons if such persons are supervised by Infection Prevention and Control Officers or Occupational Health and Safety in the workplace:

- (i) specific health care workers;
  - (ii) workers who provide emergency health care services;
  - (iii) workers who are essential to maintain essential services;
  - (iv) workers who maintain supply chain; or
  - (v) rail, airline and transport crews.
- Additional precautions may be added depending on the workplace.
  - <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/self-isolation>

#### 8. [What PPE should be used for treating asymptomatic patients?](#)

- The requirements for PPE are being updated on an ongoing basis. The current requirements on PPE, mask use and infection control can be found at: <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/information-for-health-care-providers/ppe-infection-prevention-and-control>

#### 9. [As a physiotherapist, can I do COVID 19 testing that involves swabbing?](#)

- Physiotherapists would have the base educational knowledge to perform the testing for COVID 19. Cardiorespiratory knowledge and skills are considered a core competency for physiotherapists. With training, for the specific task of swabbing, which may be provided by the employer, a physiotherapist is able to perform this task. It is part of the physiotherapists General Standard of Conduct to inform the employer if they do not feel competent to perform the skill without supervision.
- Background:
  - The Regulatory Bylaws of The SCPT indicate:
    - Basic procedures
      - 17: Basic physical therapy procedures are those that may be performed through successful completion of educational programs necessary for membership in the college.
  - Further definition is noted under Alternative therapies Section:
    - (3) For the purposes of this section, “practice of physical therapy” means the use by a physical therapist of their specific knowledge, skills and professional judgment to improve individuals’ functional independence and physical performance, manage physical impairments, disabilities and handicaps, and promote health and fitness.
- Through the training that is completed in the Cardio Respiratory curriculum within Accredited Physiotherapy Programs, physiotherapists would obtain the core competencies and base education for this skill/ procedure. As with any

procedure performed by a physiotherapist, training in the specific task/ skill may be required. This training may be provided by the employer.

- Within the Standards of Conduct section of the Regulatory Bylaws, the following is noted:
  - General standards 19(1)
    - No member shall:
      - (i) fail to inform an employer of the physical therapist's inability to accept specific responsibility in areas where special training is required or where the physical therapist does not feel competent to function without supervision;