

Association of Hearing Instrument Practitioners of Ontario

Quality Assurance Committee
May 27, 2020

COVID-19 - Return to Practice Guidelines

Overview

Ontario is currently in the midst of a global pandemic. The Corona Virus Disease - 2019 (COVID-19) is causing an outbreak of respiratory (lung) disease. The virus typically spreads through coughing and sneezing, personal contact with an infected person, or by touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching their face, mouth, nose or eyes. While the severity of this illness varies from person to person, most of those afflicted will experience mild symptoms and recover, however others will suffer with serious illness requiring hospital care. There are steps that can be taken to prevent the spread of infection.

This document will provide guidance and information to protect your employees and patients from COVID-19 in your clinic. These guidelines are predicated on and aligned with information provided by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Public Health Ontario, Public Health Advisory of Canada, the federal and provincial governments and the World Health Organization. While some of this guidance may not apply to every practice, hearing healthcare professionals are expected to use their professional judgment in an ethical manner.

Guiding Principles

1. Protecting health and safety is imperative and everyone's right and obligation.
2. Patient needs must be balanced with the risks of spreading COVID-19 and therefore treatment plans must prioritize care with the lowest risk of COVID-19 transmission.
3. Wherever possible, physical distancing must be maintained throughout the clinic.
4. Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) must be used for the safe delivery of hearing healthcare.
5. Observe enhanced Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) standards and practices.
6. Communication is vital particularly as it pertains to policies and practices related to COVID-19.

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Protective Measures to Keep Everyone Safe

- Ensure that your clinic is clean and hygienic.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Clean your hands often, using soap and water or a alcohol-based (70%) hand sanitizer.
- Keep two metres distance from others.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Cover your cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue. Discard tissue immediately after use and wash your hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) or at a minimum a face mask or covering should be used, especially when you are unable to maintain a two metres distance from others.
- Avoid greetings such as handshaking or hugging/touching.

Policy for Employee Attendance

Employers must ensure that staff do not attend work if they are sick. Consider implementing strategies listed below.

- Implement telepractice/teleworking options as practical and if available.
- Stagger work shifts or allow flexible work hours and/or schedules.
- Should staff be taken ill with COVID-19, they must self-isolate for a period of 14 days.
- Provide flexible policies so staff may stay home to care for a sick family member, or if they must self-isolate because they have been in close contact with an individual with COVID-19.

Screen Staff for COVID-19 Symptoms before Work

It is suggested that clinics consider measuring temperature of their staff before each work shift. A no touch forehead thermometer is recommended. Refer to Appendix 1.

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Keep Patients Safe

- Walk-in appointments should be discouraged.
- Conduct phone pre-screening and day of appointment screening. See Appendix 2.
- Minimize waiting room time. When scheduling appointments, allow extra time between patients in order to facilitate adequate cleaning and disinfecting of the treatment room.
- Reduce overcrowding. No visitor/companion in consultation, treatment room.
- Increase use of online or phone services.
- Consider curb side delivery.
- Make hand sanitizers available for patients and visitors at entry and exit locations.
- Be cognizant of continued privacy obligations as they pertain to telepractice/teleworking.

Screen all Patients and Visitors

Adopt the practice of taking the temperature of all individuals entering the clinic, including employees, vendors, patients and guests. A no touch forehead thermometer is recommended. Refer to Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.

Infection Control Practices and Procedures

All personnel must continue to observe infection prevention and control practices and procedures in the workplace, in order to prevent COVID-19 transmission. You may refer to AHIP's Infection Control Policy, IPAC Canada or Public Health Ontario for further guidance.

Clean Hands Often

Before

- Initial contact with a patient
- Putting on PPE
- Preparing or handling equipment
- Eating or drinking

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After

- Contact with blood, secretions of a patient (i.e. earwax), even if gloves were worn
- Removing PPE such as gloves
- Contact with a patient
- Hands are visibly soiled
- Handling waste
- Cleaning contaminated and visibly soiled equipment (e.g. otoscope)
- Using the bathroom

Use and Provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal protective equipment refers to face masks, gloves and protective eyewear including face shields and safety glasses. The Ontario Government has developed an online PPE Supplier Directory and may be accessed at ontario.ca/ppe.

Clinic wear should be changed daily and only worn in the clinic. At a minimum, 3/4 sleeved clothing is strongly encouraged.

Cleaning and Disinfectants

Step up efforts to clean and disinfect high-touch areas (i.e. chairs, handles, tables, counters, etc.) more often than usual. Treatment Rooms must be cleaned and disinfected after each appointment taking care to wear appropriate PPE. For additional information you may refer to <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html#tbl1>

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Engineering Controls/Workplace Controls

- Reposition workstations to increase physical distances.
- Install barriers, partitions and/or shields.
- Make hand hygiene supplies readily available and highly visible.
- Post signs of safety measures throughout your clinic including in the bathrooms.
- Increase ventilation rates in the clinic.
- Install high-efficiency air filters.
- Establish policies to limit number of employees and/or visitors within the clinic at any given time.
- Provide personal protective equipment to staff (and visitors) and provide training and education in the proper use of such protective wear.
- Discourage physical cash/currency payments and encourage payment by debit or credit card.
- Prohibit work gatherings.
- Permit breaks/meals outside the clinic for social distancing.
- Encourage virtual meetings.
- Discourage sharing of equipment and work spaces.
- Telework/telepractice whenever possible.
- Implement staggered work shifts.
- Limit the number of people in the clinic at any given time.

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Communication

- Stay informed by monitoring the media, applicable government websites (as outlined in the Resources section of this document).
- Stay tuned for membership mailings from the AHIP Office.
- Share pertinent information.
- Establish a communication process in order to update staff and patients on changes to your clinic practices during COVID-19, as appropriate. Regular and timely communications are a good business practice and may allay fear, anxiety, rumours and misinformation.
- Educate staff on preventative measures to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.
- Display posters and information throughout the clinic. Refer to Resources Section for examples.

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APPENDIX 1

Staff Screening

Date	Staff Name	Temperature 37.8 C or greater	Positive COVID-19 Screening?
			Yes or No
			Yes or No
			Yes or No
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			Yes or No

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APPENDIX 2

Patient Screening

Name of Patient:	Prior to Appointment (date)	Day of Appointment (date)
1) Did you have close contact with anyone with acute respiratory illness or travelled outside of Ontario in the past 14 days?	Yes or No	Yes or No
2) Do you have a confirmed case of COVID-19 or had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?	Yes or No	Yes or No
3) Do you have any of the following symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fever ▪ New onset of cough ▪ Worsening chronic cough ▪ Shortness of breath ▪ Sore throat ▪ Difficulty swallowing ▪ Decrease or loss of sense of taste or smell ▪ Chills ▪ Headaches ▪ Unexplained fatigue/malaise/muscle aches ▪ Nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain ▪ Pink eye ▪ Runny nose/nasal congestion without other known cause 	Yes or No	Yes or No
4) If you are 70 years of age or older, are you experience any of the following symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delirium ▪ Unexplained or increased number of falls ▪ Acute functional decline, or worsening of chronic conditions 	Yes or No	Yes or No
5) Do you have a temperature higher than 37.8 C?	Yes or No	Yes or No

If the response is **Yes** to any of the questions, then patient be instructed to contact their family physician or Telehealth Ontario on 1.866.797.0000

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APPENDIX 3

Visitor Screening

Date	Name	Reason for Visit	Temperature 37.8 C or greater	Positive COVID-19 Screening?
				Yes or No
				Yes or No
				Yes or No
				Yes or No
				Yes or No
				Yes or No
				Yes or No
				Yes or No
				Yes or No
				Yes or No
				Yes or No
				Yes or No
				Yes or No
				Yes or No
				Yes or No
				Yes or No

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DOWNLOAD & PRINT POSTERS FOR YOUR CLINIC

COVID-19 - Cover Your Cough - <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/97a9-COVID-19-CoverYourCough.pdf>

Help Reduce the Spread of COVID-19 - <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/help-reduce-spread-covid-19/help-reduce-spread-covid-19-eng.pdf>

How to safely put on and take off a mask - https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/epi-win/how-to-use-mask-v0-1-print.pdf?sfvrsn=64ba1493_2

How to Self Isolate - <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-how-to-self-isolate.pdf?la=en>

Infection Prevention and Control Canada - Posters, Graphics, Videos - <https://ipac-canada.org/posters-graphics-and-videos.php>

Reduce the Spread of COVID-19: Wash Your Hands - <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/covid-19-handwashing/covid-19-handwashing-eng.pdf>

Physical Distancing - <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet/factsheet-covid-19-guide-physical-distancing.pdf?la=en>

Protect yourself - <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/900d-COVID-19-ProtectYourself.pdf>

Recommended Steps: Putting On Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/ipac/ppe-recommended-steps>

Public Health Ontario. (2020). <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet/factsheet-covid-19-hand-hygiene.pdf?la=en>

Reduce the Spread of COVID-19: Wash Your Hands - <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/covid-19-handwashing/covid-19-handwashing-eng.pdf>

Stop the Spread of Germs - CDC - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/stop-the-spread-of-germs.pdf>

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OTHER RESOURCES

Ontario	Government of Ontario:	<u>Sector-Specific resources to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace</u>
	Public Health Ontario:	<u>IPAC Recommendations for Use of Personal Protective Equipment for Care of Individuals with Suspect or Confirmed COVID-19</u>
	Health and Safety Ontario	<u>Occupational Health and Safety Act</u>
	Ontario Human Rights Commission:	<u>Policy Statement on the COVID-19 Pandemic</u> <u>COVID-19 and Ontario’s Human Rights Code – Questions and Answers</u>
	Toronto Public Health:	<u>COVID-19 Guidance for Workplaces / Businesses and Employers</u>
	Personal Protective Equipment	<u>Ontario.ca/ppe</u> <u>https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/ipac/report-covid-19-universal-mask-use-health-care-settings.pdf?la=en</u>
Canada	Government of Canada:	<u>Risk-informed decision-making guidelines for workplaces and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic</u> <u>Preventing COVID-19 in the workplace: Employers, employees and essential service workers</u> <u>Cleaning and disinfecting public spaces during COVID-19</u> <u>Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers (COVID-19): List of hand sanitizers authorized by Health Canada</u> <u>Travel restrictions, exemptions and advice</u> <u>Laws and regulations protecting Canadians</u>

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