

Companion Document: Infection Control Practices in Physiotherapy

Purpose

The goal of this companion document is to enhance understanding and application of infection control measures within physiotherapy. It emphasizes the importance of adherence to best practices that safeguard the health and safety of clients, healthcare providers, and the community.

Key Components of Infection Control

1. Education and Training

Physiotherapists must acquire ongoing education and training to maintain proficiency in infection prevention and control. This may include:

- Understanding current best practices and guidelines.
- Participating in workshops and training sessions.
- Keeping abreast of new research and developments in infection control.

2. Point of Care Risk Assessment (PoCRA)

Before every client interaction, physiotherapists are required to conduct a PoCRA to assess the risk of infection. This assessment will guide the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other infection control measures. Key considerations include:

- The health status of the client.
- The nature of the therapy being provided.
- Environmental factors that may impact infection risk.

3. Hand Hygiene Protocols

Hand hygiene remains a cornerstone of infection control. Protocols for hand hygiene can be found on the Government of Canada¹ website, Manitoba Health² website and on the websites of large public employers such as Shared Health³ and the WRHA⁴. A physiotherapist is expected to be aware of and adhere to their employer policies for infection control.

4. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE includes gloves, gowns, masks, and face protection.

Selection and use of PPE should be guided by the PoCRA findings and physiotherapists are expected to follow employer policies and provincial health orders.

Resources for PPE should be provided by the physiotherapist's employer and information on Routine Practices and Precautions is available through the Manitoba Health website⁵.

5. Equipment Cleaning and Environmental Control

- Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and equipment are critical to prevent cross-contamination.

Resources for cleaning and disinfecting equipment should be available through the physiotherapist's employer and can be found on the Manitoba Health website⁵.

6. Ensuring Availability of Infection Control Resources

To ensure they are able to meet the Infection Control standards, the physiotherapist should:

- Ensure facilities and supplies for hand hygiene appropriate PPE, and equipment/environmental control procedures are available in the practice environment.
- Identify deficient in these areas and report them to responsible parties.
- When in setting outside of the usual practice environment (e.g. home visits), carry appropriate equipment for routine practices as needed (e.g. hand sanitizer, PPE)

Definitions:

Cleaning: This refers to the physical removal of foreign material (e.g., dust, soil, organic material such as blood, secretions, excretions and microorganisms). Cleaning physically removes rather than kills microorganisms. It is accomplished by using water and detergents in conjunction with mechanical⁵ action.

Disinfection: Disinfection is the inactivation of disease-producing microorganisms with the exception of bacterial spores. Hospital-grade disinfectants are used on inanimate objects and require a drug identification number (DIN) for sale in Canada.

High level disinfection: This level of disinfection is required when processing semi-critical items. High level disinfection processes destroy vegetative bacteria, mycobacteria, fungi and enveloped(lipid) and non-enveloped(non-lipid) viruses, but not necessarily bacterial spores.

Low level disinfection: This level of disinfection is required when processing non-critical items and some environmental surfaces. Low level disinfectants kill most vegetative bacteria and some fungi as well as enveloped (lipid) viruses (e.g., influenza, hepatitis B and C, and HIV). Low level disinfectants do not kill mycobacteria or bacterial spores.⁵

References:

- 1) Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/healthy-living/hand-hygiene.html>. Accessed on Nov.5, 2024.
- 2) Manitoba Health. <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/ipc.html>. Accessed on Nov.5, 2024.
- 3) Shared Health. <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/providers/ipc-resources/>. Accessed on Nov.5, 2024.
- 4) Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. <https://professionals.wrha.mb.ca/infection-prevention-control/hand-hygiene-resources/>. Accessed on Nov.5, 2024.
- 5) Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living. Routine Practices and Additional Precautions: Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Health Care. June 2019. <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/docs/ipc/rpap.pdf>. Accessed on Nov.5, 2024.