



COVID-19 | NSPA Update – May 24th, 2020

The NSPA wants to provide members an update as the Province of Nova Scotia begins discussion around planning for re-opening.

It is widely known that the Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Robert Strang, has sought the advice of health professions to guide the re-opening process. The NSPA has been regularly meeting with the Nova Scotia College of Physiotherapists, collaborating and sharing resources. We have been in communication with the Department of Health and Wellness, and thus, the Department of Public Health and the Office of the Chief Medical Officer, but our primary focus remains to support the work being done by the College on behalf of physiotherapists.

This is an opportunity to highlight the mandate and mission of the NSPA. We aim to support our members and advance the profession in Nova Scotia. With the planning taking place for re-opening, the creation of guidelines falls within the jurisdiction of the regulatory body, with support from other stakeholders. This explains why we've been in support of the College and also why the NSPA won't be releasing specific guidelines for physiotherapists to follow. We will however, work hard to advocate and promote the role of physiotherapists to ensure the guidelines are clear, realistic and feasible. As well as to help facilitate access to resources for re-opening, whenever possible.

As of this writing, we are not able to determine what the specific guidelines will be for physiotherapists returning to work. However, through ongoing conversations with the college, current public health orders, and with other jurisdictions in the process of re-opening or currently open, we have been able to identify some areas that physiotherapists and clinic owners likely need to consider when re-opening:

1. Physical distancing, when feasible
2. Hand hygiene for clinicians, staff, and patients
3. Personal protective equipment and/or barriers for clinicians, staff, and patients when physical distancing is not feasible
4. Policies and guidelines for staff and patients of the facility to follow to ensure their safety
5. Legal policies and guidelines to demonstrate that employers are taking steps to ensure the safety of staff and patients
6. Policies and guidelines for the facility to follow to meet public health orders
7. Policies and procedures in case of an identified case of COVID-19 within the facility

For some of these issues, members may find this link helpful:

<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/working-during-covid-19/>



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This list is nowhere near exhaustive nor is it an accurate representation of what will be provided to physiotherapists in Nova Scotia. Its intent is to begin the thought process and conversation among physiotherapists and clinic owners as we begin the return to work process. For example, over the next few days, it may be best to consider how the layout of your clinic will facilitate physical distancing for administrative staff and patients in the waiting area, or how you will ensure proper hand hygiene of everyone entering your facility. While we do not know the content of the re-opening guidelines, it is safe to assume these will be important aspects as they constitute the primary methods of infection control disseminated by the Department of Health and Wellness. Furthermore, it is in the best interest of clinic owners and employees to have clear communication on policies and guidelines to ensure the safety, both physical and legal, of everyone involved.

The NSPA has also been taking the steps to help ensure that supplies are readily available for physiotherapists across Nova Scotia when re-opening takes place. As mentioned, the Government of Nova Scotia has indicated that wearing a mask is beneficial when social distancing is difficult or not possible. As such, we have worked with some local suppliers that have committed to providing physiotherapists with access to PPE. The current list can be found here:

http://www.physiotherapyns.ca/images/uploads/NSPA_PPE_Supplier_Resources_template.pdf

This is in addition to the suppliers and information provided by the CPA, which can be found here:

<https://physiotherapy.ca/clinic-reopening>

I want to thank you all for your patience as we try to keep everyone up to date with re-opening plans. We ask that everyone appreciate and understand that our role as the Association is one of promotion and advocacy, and we are not in a position to create or enforce public health guidelines. Furthermore, we are a representative group with not all physiotherapists in Nova Scotia as members, and as such, are not in contact with all physiotherapists in the province. We will, however, continue working hard on behalf of all physiotherapists in Nova Scotia and appreciate your questions and feedback, and will work hard to respond as we are able.

All the best,

Stephen Richey, PT
President