



Return to Practice/Resiliency Planning Guide

To the Chiropractors of BC

The BCCA is proud to support members from across the province as clinics reopen and practitioners return to delivering in-person care following COVID-19 related closures.

While we know that many of you have already implemented return to practice procedures based on CCBC, WorkSafeBC and BCCDC guidelines, and that the operational challenges faced in the wake of the pandemic will differ on a regional and community basis, one of the most integral lessons learned by us all over the last few months is that strength lies in unity. With this in mind, the BCCA set out to create a document that will assist members as they navigate return to practice and plan for the weeks and months ahead.

In the first section, you'll find direction on creating a Return to Practice/Resiliency Plan designed to help you proactively manage important functions such as ongoing clinic operations, marketing and communications, and the health and wellness of you and your staff.

The second section is dedicated to sharing the community-sourced solutions from the BCCA's recent **ThoughtExchange** where members were asked to share some of the procedures and protocols they have implemented to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in their clinics. We have curated a collection of the highest rated posts that we hope you will look to as a list of best practices that the community can build on to help elevate the profession's response to this unprecedented public health crisis.

SECTION ONE:

Expanding In-Office Care - Developing a Return to Practice/Resiliency Plan

The pandemic response is a marathon not a sprint. With this in mind, as the profession moves forward with the expansion of in-person care, it is important that practitioners consider developing a purposeful plan that will not only help their practice succeed in this new and uncharted reality but will also lay the foundation for their business to adapt and survive in the event of a second wave of COVID-19.

To help guide the expansion of in-person care in your practice and develop a sustainable plan that can accommodate changes related to a resurgence of cases and/or a second wave of COVID-19, begin by considering the following;

- Take time to reflect on what has changed - think about how you want to practice in the next few months or years.
- Assess the broader picture - how is your region and community doing when it comes to COVID-19 cases?
- Develop a rough timeline - recognize that there may be surges over the next few months, or even seasonally; create a flexible plan that can be scaled up or down accordingly, based on the current situation.
- Is virtual care a tool you feel comfortable using to maintain contact with your patients when an in-person appointment is not possible? If so, determine guidelines for how and when it will be used and consider how you will educate patients on the benefits that can be experienced via this type of care.

Remember that change is constant, and you and your colleagues may not be at the same place when it comes to your approach and timeline for delivering in-person care now and in the future. The type of clinic you practice in (multi-disciplinary, sole practitioner, etc.), where you are located (urban vs. rural), your patient panel, and your own health, risk factors, and personal circumstances will all help determine what your unique return to practice roadmap looks like now, and in the event of a second-wave of COVID-19.

Assess and Mitigate Risks - Clinic Operations

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads in several ways. It can spread in droplets when a person coughs or sneezes. It can also spread if you touch a contaminated surface and then touch your face. The risk of person-to-person transmission increases the closer you come to other people, the more time you spend near them, and the more people you come near. The risk of surface transmission increases when many people contact the same surface and when those contacts happen over short periods of time.

Documenting the cleaning policies and guidelines your clinic has implemented to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission will serve your business in many ways as you expand in-person care. Not only can you reference this list when regularly assessing activities for quality assurance, you can also use it to help create marketing messages that will work to ensure that patients (and staff) feel your clinic is a safe place to be.

Below is a list of measures to consider implementing and documenting as part of your clinic's Return to Practice/Resiliency Plan:



- Consider the benefits associated with having both the patient and the practitioner wear masks, take any additional precautionary measures requested by individual patients seriously (i.e. patients with compromised immune systems, undergoing cancer treatment, etc.) and accommodate their requests if possible.
- Go paperless. Use virtual forms (no clipboards or pens!) and fax requisitions directly to the receiving entity so the patient isn't given paper.
- Consider contactless payment options, including tap.
- Remove all non-essential items: flyers, brochures, displays, toys, magazines, etc.
- Rearrange workspaces to provide distance between employees and consider dedicated workstations and patient rooms so fewer people touch the same equipment.
- COVID-19 posters and signage should be placed at entrance doors, reception area, and treatment rooms.
- Post signage and create a voicemail message and email advisory telling patients how to check in when they arrive for in-person appointments.
- Post hand hygiene and cough etiquette signs in the waiting area.
- Ensure alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with at least 70% alcohol) is available at multiple locations: office entrance, reception counter, waiting room, and by every treatment room for use before entering and upon exit. Consider automated dispensers affixed to walls wherever possible to reduce handling.
- Install Plexi-glass partitions to separate patients from reception staff. Limit use of shared items by patients (e.g. pens, clipboards, phones) - If pens are essential, create a "sanitized" and an "used" pen container so the patients can ensure they are using a clean pen.
- Rearrange the waiting room to ensure a minimum 2 metre distance between people, or if not possible consider bringing patients in from their vehicles one by one
- Replace cloth-covered furnishings with easy-to-clean furniture where possible. Provide disposable tissues and no-touch waste receptacles in the waiting area and treatment rooms.
- Provide plain soap and paper towels in patient washrooms and at staff sinks and post hand hygiene posters.
- Empty treatment rooms of all but bare minimum of equipment and remove all magazines, pamphlets or toys.
- Provide paper sheeting for treatment tables and change between patients.
- Educate all clinical and administrative staff about current IPC guidelines regarding office infection prevention and control, PPE and hand hygiene.
- Post current cleaning policies and guidelines, including a list of approved cleaning products, per WSBC and BCCDC for all office clinicians and staff to be aware of.
- If you treat patients who are frontline healthcare workers, consider scheduling them during designated time slots at the end of the day.

Communication is Key

Clear and consistent communication is always good business practice, but during these uncertain and rapidly changing times, keeping your patients up to date on your clinic's efforts to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission is essential.

Including a simple communications strategy in your plan will ensure that your clinic's messaging aligns across all platforms (website, newsletter, social media, and in-office/in-person) and that all staff members are trained to communicate your clinic's policies and procedures confidently and effectively.

Written Communications

Whether it's via your website, an email newsletter, social media, and/or in-clinic messaging, sharing the precautionary measures your clinic is taking to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission can help mitigate patient anxiety surrounding in-person appointments.

Timely messaging is important, so make sure that your plan addresses what will trigger the need for the dissemination of new patient communication (usually a change that will affect your patients), who is responsible for creating that messaging, and how, where and when it will be disseminated.

Note that a resurgence of COVID-19 cases in your community, the issuance of new regulatory or public health directives, or a surge of similar inquiries from patients should all be considered significant events that mark a need to assess the situation, determine how/if it effects your clinic and/or patients, and evaluate the need to create and distribute new messaging.

When creating general patient-facing materials for your website, newsletters, etc., consider including messaging that addresses the following:

- Advise patients if they will be expected to wear a mask and if so, whether or not they are required to bring their own.
- Outline the physical distancing measures expected and advise of any signage installed to assist patients with adhering to protocols (floor decals, etc.).
- Share check-in procedures implemented to promote physical distancing.
- Advise patients of any visitor restrictions (i.e. only those with appointments will be allowed in the clinic with the exception of caregivers and adults accompanying minors).
- Reinforce the importance of staying home if a patient is feeling unwell and share the details surrounding your COVID-19 related cancellation policy.



- Expectations upon arrival and departure (i.e. use of hand sanitizer upon entering and exiting the clinic, location of sanitizer dispensers, and protocols for disposing of any PPE used during the visit).
- Advise patients if virtual care/telehealth appointments are offered and how to book them.
- Share any innovative measures you have taken to ensure the safety of those entering your clinic.

Personal Interaction

When interacting with patients, try to develop both verbal and physical routines that reinforce the concept that their safety is your first priority. This can include:

- Washing your hands in front of patients (when possible) or applying hand sanitizer in their presence/as you enter the treatment room.
- Advising patients that any equipment you ask them to come in contact with has been sanitized before they use it (i.e. When asking a patient to lie down on the treatment table, share details of cleaning protocols, including how and when it was last cleaned).
- If staff are cleaning tables in advance, consider having tent cards or other signage that they can place on cleaned equipment to indicate it has been sanitized.
- Respectfully addressing any questions regarding your clinic's health and safety policies
- Always trying to accommodate reasonable requests for measures outside of your current protocol to be taken based on a patient's unique health profile (compromised immune system, cancer patient, etc.).
- Thinking twice before denying a reasonable request from a patient who asks you take extra precautions during their appointment - consider how refusal could reflect poorly upon your business, your reputation and the chiropractic profession.
- Educating front-office staff so that they can confidently communicate the clinic's risk mitigation measures and answer any FAQs.

While people may forget what you say, they will always remember how you made them *feel*.

Effective in-person communication relaying the measures your clinic is taking to protect the community will reassure patients who may have been hesitant to come in for an appointment that they made a sound decision and will foster a sense of safety that will encourage them to return.

Health, Wellness and Resilience - You and Your Staff

During a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it is common for everyone to experience increased levels of distress and anxiety, particularly as a result of social isolation. Those working in health care are particularly vulnerable to negative mental health effects as they strive to balance the duty of caring for patients with concerns about their own well-being and that of their family and friends.

Consider the following:

- In your plan, include a commitment to host regular team meetings to ensure everyone is kept up to date on the clinic's policies and procedures.
- Devote extra time to training CA's on new COVID-19 related policies and procedures and create a documented training program for any new employees - feeling confident in the ability to do your job correctly can help reduce stress and the risk of employee burn-out.
- Implement an open-door policy and encourage staff to ask questions - transparency is important during uncertain times and can help reduce the spread of rumours and potentially damaging false information.

Recognize the additional strain put on practitioners and staff during this time. Remember to focus on the health and wellness of yourself, your staff and your colleagues, so that everyone will have the resilience to continue to provide care for patients in the weeks and months to come.

"This is not forever, but it is for now." - Dr. Bonnie Henry

Acknowledgements

Portions of Section One were taken directly and/or adapted from the Doctors of BC document, [The Doctor is In. Recommendations for expanding in-person care and community-based physician practices.](#) May 21, 2020. Version 1.0

SECTION TWO:

Return to Practice - Tips from BCCA Members

Shortly after a directive was issued by the Public Health Officer in May allowing chiropractors in British Columbia to expand in-person care, the BCCA hosted a return to practice ThoughtExchange where members were asked the following question:

As you return to practice, what are some of the procedures and protocols you have implemented at your clinic to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission? Include what's worked, what hasn't (and why), and the innovative solutions you've come up with for overcoming any new and/or unforeseen issues.

Below we have curated and categorized the information collected and are proud to share the innovative solutions that BCCA members have implemented in their clinics to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Please note: This list is not to be interpreted as an official directive nor is it all inclusive. It is being provided for informative purposes only, and members are responsible for ensuring that their policies and procedures align with all applicable College of Chiropractors of BC, WorkSafeBC, and BCCDC directives.

Office Set Up

- Install plexiglass/acrylic barriers at reception
- Install social distancing stickers and signage throughout the office - people have become accustomed to looking for these and appreciate the direction
- Adhere to a regular cleaning schedule
- Adopt a minimalist approach - create a smaller reception area/front desk, remove unnecessary items such as knick-knack, magazines, pamphlets and toys, and eliminate any cloth covered furniture
- Only use waiting areas if it is essential, minimize chairs, and space them at least 2 metres apart
- Place hand sanitizer at clinic entrances and in each room
- Make cleaning supplies visible and (when possible) allow patients to witness cleaning taking place- this practice instils confidence and demonstrates that the clinic is taking cleaning procedures seriously
- Space out equipment in the clinic to give the perception of more room to accommodate physical distancing
- When possible, divide the clinic into sections that help reduce traffic and eliminate

Appointment/Patient Management

- Space out appointments - decrease patient volume to reduce congestion and mitigate overlap of patients in hallway and reception
- Increase time between appointments to accommodate cleaning rooms and equipment in between in each patient
- Divide staff into teams and have them alternate days to reduce the total number of people in the clinic at any given time.
- Adopt a new check patient check-in system - options include phoning from outside and implementing online check-in



- Reduce contact with CA's - go paperless, allow patients to pay online, make it possible for patients to book their next appointment with the practitioner while in the treatment room

Protocols and Procedures

- Require all practitioners, staff and patients to wear masks
- Wash hands before and after treating patients to prevent transmission between patients.
- Implement a rigorous screening process that goes beyond screening patients and includes a pre-shift screening of practitioners and staff
- Implement hand sanitizing procedures for patients when they enter and exit the clinic.
- Advise patients that they are to attend their appointment alone (with the exception of caregivers and adults accompanying minors)
- Inform patients that if they feel unwell or are sick, they should stay home - make your COVID-19 cancellation policy clear and give it a high profile on your website and outgoing phone message
- Adopt a rigorous cleaning schedule in between patients, following shifts, and at day's end - doorknobs and common areas should be cleaned with increased frequency
- Wear scrubs or a separate set of clothes at the office to minimize cross-contamination

We want to thank all members who took the time to participate in this important ThoughtExchange. Your commitment to advancing the reputation of the Chiropractors of BC and ensuring the safety of your patients and staff during the COVID-19 crisis is remarkable, and we appreciate you sharing your experiences and expertise.

For a closer look at members' posts, including some innovative suggestions not featured here, please see the BCCA Member Update issued on June 19, 2020.

"Be calm, be kind, be safe" - Dr. Bonnie Henry