

Wimborne Osteopathic Clinic – Health and Safety review for re-opening (Covid 19)

Background:

We reviewed all aspects of the patient journey to identify risk areas for infection control and how we could minimise those risks. This includes prior to the appointment, during and after the appointment.

Symptoms:

The UK Government recognises

- High temperature
- New persistent cough
- Anosmia

as symptoms of Covid 19 and the advice is to follow self-isolation advice for yourself and your household (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/check-if-you-have-coronavirus-symptoms/>)

It is worth noting that the WHO includes:

- Dry cough
- Fever
- Tiredness
- GI symptoms
- Muscle aches

Spread/mode of infection:

Covid 19 is spread from person to person via droplet spread or through contact with surfaces which have been contaminated by respiratory secretions from an infected person. The virus is airborne and is contracted when these particles enter your eyes, nose or mouth.

It is thought that you could be infectious for 2-3 days prior to the onset of symptoms and some people may have no symptoms at all but still be capable of spreading the disease.

You should therefore work on the basis that EVERYONE is potentially infectious.

Droplet spread is more likely when people are standing closer than 2m to each other. Droplets can fall to the ground and land on the floor and surfaces. They may remain contagious for several hours or days depending on the surface type.

Droplets can also remain in the air for several hours and cause reinfection of someone else. The greater the exposure of the environment to potentially infectious droplets, the higher the viral load of the environment and the more likely it is to cause infection.

Breathing and talking all contribute, in low concentrations, to droplet spread in the atmosphere. Coughing and sneezing leads to higher concentrations of droplets in the atmosphere.

Airborne spread is related to aerosol generating acts / procedures. These include forced exhalations (producing a 'huff')/forced cough.

Twenty minutes of aeration of a room is required for air exchange, significantly reducing the viral load in the atmosphere.

Fans can contribute to the spreading of droplets in the air.

Hygiene:

The Covid 19 virus is effectively rendered inactive / destroyed by alcohol (>70 % NCOR, >60% gov.uk), soaps which dissolve the lipid membrane and high temperatures (70 degrees for 5 minutes).

Risk to health:

Certain people may be at higher risk of serious complications if they contacted Covid 19. They may have been advised to shield. This may change as new evidence is discovered. See NHS sources for medium and high-risk groups.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>

Those who live with people who are shielded and high risk will require particular thought as to whether a face to face treatment is appropriate.

Pregnant ladies are not thought to be at higher risk but are in the moderate group risk group given the limited amount of data current available.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/if-you-live-with-someone-at-very-high-risk-from-coronavirus/>

If you are unsure then please check NHS / Government sources for information on risk groups. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/if-you-live-with-someone-at-very-high-risk-from-coronavirus/>

In addition to the risk to health of patients, osteopaths and other therapists need to self-assess the risk to themselves and other members of their households. This will be dependent on their own health, the health of others in their household and their own personal feelings.

Prior to appointment

Areas to consider

- *communication (informed consent requires the patient being given access to information that will affect their decision re booking for treatment)*
- *Treatment criteria – who do we treat and who do we not?*
- *Ensuring those people attending the clinic do not put the osteopaths, other patients or general public at undue risk*
- *Access to treatment and support – if a patient isn't suitable for face to face consultations, how will we support them?*
- *practitioner health*
- *Travel – practitioner and patients*

Policies:

- **Communication / Information** – Ensure our patients have the information they need regarding our policies and procedures on infection control prior to booking their appointments. This will enable them to assess the risk for themselves and make an informed decision about treatment and give them a clear understanding of what to expect.

These will be published on our website and available through social media. It needs to include that the risk of Covid 19 cannot be eliminated but we will undertake best practice to mitigate it so far as practicable. We will also detail categories of patients, such as those who have been advised to self-isolate due to symptoms or a positive test.

Prior to re-opening we will send a newsletter to our subscribed patients detailing these policies and procedures. These will also be shared across our social media platforms.

A copy of the link to our policies and procedures will be attached to the booking confirmation email.

A condensed version of the patient's and the osteopath's role in infection control will be included in the text of booking confirmation and reminder emails. We will also display posters within clinic highlighting key points of our infection control and PPE policies.

- **Treatment Criteria:** Current guidelines (from the Institute of Osteopathy, from Public Health England) state we can see someone face to face if:
 - there is a clinical need
 - emergency / urgent care – a condition which is worsening, preventing the person from working or where there is a concern over a pathological cause. It also includes patients who have care needs, that if not met, will require them to access their GP or secondary social care agencies. This is especially important if they themselves are a carer for someone who is vulnerable.
 - Those in higher or moderate risk groups need to be evaluated on a risk to benefits ratio and seen as the first appointment of the day.
 - Exclusion criteria - We must not treat patients experiencing symptoms of coronavirus for 7 days from onset of symptoms, those with a household member who has corona virus symptoms in the past 14 days, those who have had contact with a known Covid 19 + person in the last 14 days and those advised to self-isolate or anyone awaiting a test result.
 - Follow updates on iO website for changes to this /clarity if unsure

- **Pre- screening:** The day before an appointment each patient will be contacted by telephone to screen that it is both safe and appropriate for them to attend the clinic and to ensure that they understand the risks in attending including travel arrangements. This will include screening for exclusion criteria listed above.

We will also screen to assess and discuss the risk especially for those in moderate and high risk groups The decision whether to treat in clinic will be dependent on the clinical judgement of the osteopath and assessment of the need for face to face care.

All patients will be assessed on an individual basis (except where definite exclusions apply) to ascertain the risk to them, the osteopath, other patients / members of the public balanced against their need for face to face care.

Details of symptoms will also be taken as part of the screening call to reduce the length of any face to face contact. This will help to reduce risk and allow additional time for cleaning and aeration etc.

All assessments of risk and screening answers will be recorded in the notes.

If pre-screening has not been completed patients will not be allowed entry to the clinic.

- **Access to treatment/support:** If we feel face to face appointment is not safe / required then we will still offer to help people via video / phone consultations.

Where necessary they will be directed towards other healthcare service i.e. GP/NHS 111.

- **Osteopath's health:** Osteopaths/ anyone working at the clinic will be required to ensure they are fit and well and able to work. They should follow Government guidelines re self-isolation if they / anyone in their household develops symptoms of Covid 19.

If they are informed that they have had close contact with someone who has subsequently tested positive then current guidance is that they do not need to isolate, provided they were wearing the advised level of PPE. Whilst there is no requirement that patients seen by that practitioner between the date of seeing the patient who subsequently tested positive and the reporting of must be informed, this should be done as a matter of courtesy so that they can be alert to symptoms and because it may have implications for other members of their household.

However, if the osteopath subsequently develop symptoms, they must self isolate and seek testing. In their private lives all osteopaths and those working within the clinic should be adhering to Government guidelines re social distancing and contact with people outside of their household.

- **Travel** As far as we are aware, all osteopaths / people working from the clinic travel by private car or walking. Should they need to use public transport to access work they must assess if the risk is reasonable compared to the benefits and consider there's and the health of their patients in making this decision. Government guidance regarding infection control (currently, wearing masks and social distancing) on public transport should be adhered to.

Attending a face to face appointment

Areas to consider:

Social Distancing:

- **Cross over of osteopaths and patients between appointments**
 - **Contact of patients waiting for their appointments**
 - **Social distancing measures.**
- **cross over times:** Appointment times will be staggered throughout the day. This will ensure there is minimal, if any crossing of osteopaths or other patients in the clinic. If for whatever reason there is a cross over then social distancing should be maintained.

The length of appointments has been increased from 30 to 45 minutes. This not only allows for aeration and cleaning of the room but also minimises cross over between patients.

- **patient to patient contacts:** These will be minimised by the staggered appointment times.

We will also request that patients do not arrive early for their appointment. Patients are to wait outside the clinic (at a safe social distance from other people). The practitioner will meet the patient at the door (hopefully avoiding the need for the patient to touch the bell or door) and take them straight into the treatment room.

Patients will not be permitted access to the clinic to wait for their appointment.

Patients will be asked to leave promptly after their treatment.

- **social distancing:** the patient and osteopath must maintain a 2 m distance as much as possible. For example, during case history taking when demonstrating exercises. The 2 m distance should only be breached for required elements of the treatment and then adequate PPE should be in place.

Other osteopaths and practitioners should socially distance from each other when in clinic. This includes changing at the start and end of the day, break times and lunchtimes. These should preferably be taken separately and at different times where possible.

Infection Control:

Areas to consider:

- **patient responsibilities** – hand cleanliness, bringing infection into the clinic environment
- **osteopath responsibilities** – hand cleanliness, cross contamination between patients, bringing infection into the clinic
- **treatment room hygiene** – cross contamination between patients (air, soft surfaces, hard surfaces. Consider droplet and airborne spread)
- **clinic environment** – common areas, cross contamination, airborne and droplet spread
- **laundry** – cross contamination between patients, effective cleaning controls
- **waste disposal** – cross contamination if contents contacted, risk to refuse collectors
- **payments** – cash is a source of infection into the clinic and cross contamination, cleanliness of push buttons on card machine.

Patient hygiene measures:

- **hand washing:** This is still so important for minimising the spread of this virus. On entering and leaving the clinic everyone will be required to wash their hands / use hand sanitiser. There will be posters displayed in the toilet and at the treatment room sink to show optimum technique to ensure this is done effectively.
- **personal items:** To minimise possible sources of infection, we are asking that people avoid bringing personal belongings such as handbags, into the clinic. The osteopath will present the patient with a box when they arrive into which they place all personal items which they will not touch again until they leave.
- **minimising traffic through the clinic:** Patients are requested NOT to bring friends / family members with them to their appointment. Only the person attending the appointment, will be allowed access to the clinic. Obviously in the case of anyone under the age of 16 or anyone who needs a chaperone, then they will need 1 accompanying adult.
If a patient feels they would like a chaperone for any reason this will not be denied. The chaperone will have to socially distance as much as possible and wear a face mask. This will also apply if a patient needs assistance with understanding the consultation/treatment process either due to language or cognitive issues. The osteopath will undertake pre-screening (as above) in respect of any chaperone
- **pre treatment screening:** As mentioned previously, no-one symptomatic or who has been advised to self-isolate will be seen face to face in clinic.

Osteopath hygiene measures:

- **hand washing:** This will still be of paramount importance. We will be washing our hands and arms between every patient (we will be wearing gloves too). We will be following World Health Organisation (WHO) hand washing procedures.
- **personal items:** Only essential personal items are allowed to be brought into the clinic.
- **health:** self-appraisal of our own health and isolating as required will minimise the risk of infection being brought into the clinic.
- **PPE:** wipeable PVC apron will be used to reduce the risk of contamination of uniform. Gloves should be worn when having physical contact with the patient. Ensure proper procedures of donning and doffing PPE and disposal. (see PPE section)
- **uniform:** Clothes used during treatment should be put on at work and removed before leaving. Take them off inside out and place in a pillowcase within a plastic bag

and wash immediately when returning home as per Government guidance and at the hottest temperature possible.

Osteopaths should avoid the use of clinic coats that are removed by taking them over their head and face. Zip/button fronted are preferable.

- **rings/Jewellery/watches:** These should not be worn at all during your time in clinic.

Treatment room hygiene:

- **disinfecting:** These will be disinfected between **every patient**. This will include the treatment bench, pillows (see below), seats, desks and commonly touched areas.
- **plinth covers, soft fabrics:** Towels, plinth covers and pillow cases have been removed from the treatment benches.

Pillows have been replaced with plastic hospital grade pillows which can be disinfected. Pillows will be covered with paper roll. This is to assist patient comfort whilst still maintaining hygiene standards.

- **aeration:** The treatment room door **MUST** be opened for 15 – 20 minutes between patients and during breaks and lunchtimes to allow for this aeration.

Consider patient comfort if it is cooler think about the level at which they may / may not need to undress. Patients will be asked to attend appointments wearing sports kit or similar clothing to reduce the need to undress.

- **PPE and IC station:** the treatment room will have a PPE and IC station.
- **equipment:** Any equipment (i.e. patellar hammer) used during a treatment session should be placed to one side on the PPE station within the room. This should be disinfected after each use.

Clinic environment hygiene:

- **Toilet:** The toilet area will be cleaned twice daily and commonly touched areas such as sink, taps, light pulls will be disinfected multiple times a day. There is a sign on the toilet door asking patients to notify a practitioner if they have used the toilet to allow us to disinfect surfaces.
- **Commonly touched areas:** These will be disinfected multiple times a day (i.e. door handles, intercom system -internal and external, handrail) but procurers are in place to ensure minimal contact.
- **Cleaner:** Our regular professional cleaners will clean the practice weekly. Patients will be taken straight through to treatment rooms so exposure to infectious particles in the rest of the clinic will be minimal, excluding the toilets, for which separate provision has been made.
- **Declutter:** Our reception areas and clinic rooms have already been decluttered of magazines, toys etc. As patients won't be waiting in reception this shouldn't be an issue.

Waste disposal:

- **Bins:** A pedal operated lidded bin in the treatment room will be used for all waste including used tissues, paper roll and PPE). There will be a lidded pedal bin located by the door of the clinic for the disposal of patients' masks. These will contain a double plastic bin liner. At the end of the day, or sooner if required, these bags will be tied and left in the storage cupboard. They will have the date written on the bag. They are not to be put out with the general waste until 72 hours has lapsed from the date written on the bag. Gloves/immediate hand washing should be adopted for when dealing with these waste bags, prior to the expiry of 72 hours.
- **Refuse collection:** Following Government guidance, these bin liners can be put out for collection with the general waste.

Payments:

- **Card machine:** Where possible we will encourage people to pay in advance or via contactless methods. For debit/credit cards the limit is £45, which is the same as our treatment fee. The new patient fee will be paid either online or by iZettle link as the case history part of the consultation will take place via telehealth. If a patient needs to enter their PIN using the keypad on the iZettle card reader, it will be disinfected immediately after use. The patient will also be asked to wash hands / use hand sanitiser prior to use.
- **Online payments:** We have added a Stripe online payment facility to our website. This enables patients to prepay for appointments.
- **Cash:** We will accept cash where patients cannot by card or online but we will wash / hand sanitise immediately after handling of cash. Cash will be stored for 72 hours in a money bag prior to re handling.

PPE:

- **Close proximity to patients during treatment**
- **Possible risk of aerosol generation with certain techniques – such as supine thoracic spine HVT**
- **Droplet spread**
- **Patient – to protect themselves and anyone else in close contact (<2m) within the clinic**
- **osteopath – to protect themselves and the patient**

Patient requirements:

- **Masks:** We will be providing patients with masks to be worn for the duration of time at the clinic and during their treatments. These will be triple layer masks, not home-made ones, where tolerable.

Young children will not be expected to wear masks. If older children feel comfortable to then they will be asked to wear a mask too. Parents/guardians of young children, who are attending the appointment will also be asked to wear a mask.

If a patient feels they are not able to wear a mask, try to establish why and then individual risk assessments will need to be carried out to establish if this level of risk is acceptable and/or how you might adapt your practice (treatment positions, techniques etc).

Osteopath Requirements: (see flow diagram of PPE use)

- **masks-** surgical fluid resistant masks will be worn at all times when contact is closer than 2m. These should be replaced every 4 hours or sooner if they become wet, damaged, ripped or contaminated. Hands should be washed before putting them on. Donning and doffing guidance should be followed and these will be displayed within the clinic as additional guidance. They should be disposed of in the clinical waste bin.
- **gloves:** these must be worn for all direct patient contact as per PHE guidance. Donning and doffing guidance should be followed and these will be displayed within the clinic as additional guidance. They should be disposed of in the clinical waste bin.

Gloves will be changed for each patient or sooner if they become contaminated or anything other than the patient is touched whilst wearing them. Notes should not be written up on computer whilst wearing gloves.
- **aprons** – wipeable PVC apron to protect against cross contamination onto clothes, disinfected after each patient..
- **donning and doffing** – follow guidance (available on iO website) and posters re correct procedures and ensure all PPE is disposed of properly.
- **Goggles;** The need for these is assessed on a risk assessment basis but should be worn when doing techniques that involve a ‘huff’ or cough from the patient. This may include techniques such as HVT / MET.

Post appointment

The ability to test and trace is vital to limiting the spread of infection and reducing cases.

The current evidence suggests the infectious period may begin before symptoms appear, with a consensus that is around 2.5 days, with the most infectious phase being around the day of onset. People are likely most infectious during the symptomatic period, even if symptoms are mild or non-specific.

Patients should be educated that they must inform us if they develop symptoms or have a positive test within two days of having treatment. If they subsequently test negative it would be useful to be informed.

If a patient notifies the clinic that they have developed symptoms within 2 days of attending an appointment, the osteopath does not need to isolate, provided they were wearing appropriate PPE. This is detailed in the iO guidance. <https://www.iosteopathy.org/covid-19/faq/>

For patients that have been seen by the treating practitioner during the period between seeing the suspected case and it being reported to the clinic:

- If the practitioner who has been in direct contact has been wearing PPE in line with the guidance, there is no requirement to inform patients that have been seen by the treating practitioner in the 2 days since seeing the initial patient.
- However, as a courtesy, we will inform patients that they we have seen someone who has subsequently experienced symptoms - even if the risk of infection is very small - as the vulnerability of the patient and their close relatives may be an important factor for the patient to consider.

If a practitioner develops symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19, they need to self isolate for a minimum of 7 days as advised on [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) and follow the flowchart describing [return to work following a SARS-CoV-2 test](#).

Provided the practitioner was wearing the prescribed PPE, the risk to patients is minimised. However, as a courtesy, we will inform patients that their practitioner has developed symptoms of COVID-19 - even if the risk of infection is very small - as the vulnerability of the patient and their close relatives may be an important factor for the patient to consider.

Following current NHS guidance, any patients seen in the 2 days prior to the osteopath developing symptoms do not need to self-isolate, provided they themselves have no symptoms. They should, however, take extra care to follow the guidance on social distancing, hand washing and respiratory hygiene.

- If they develop symptoms they should seek testing and they, and the rest of their household, should isolate.
- If they do not develop symptoms, they do not need to self isolate. If the osteopath tests positive, they will be notified by NHS Test & Trace if they need to isolate.

Any patients seen by the practitioner in that 2 day period should also be reminded that the practitioner is obliged to provide their contact details (no medical details) to NHS Test and Trace in the event of a positive test result.