

Massage

Client health information

In Victoria there is currently no provision in the *Health Act 1958* requiring massage or muscle stimulation businesses to be registered by Local Government. This fact sheet has been produced to allow those considering these procedures to make an informed decision about the process.

Massage

Massage therapy is the manipulation of soft tissue for therapeutic purposes. Massage may include the use of oils, powders, heat rubs, hot and cold packs and other recognised forms of massage therapy.

Before commencing a massage it is crucial that the massage therapist knows of any medical condition that you may have such as recent fractures, malignancies, varicose veins, infections, and areas of broken skin. Let the massage therapist know if you are pregnant. It is also important to let the massage therapist know of any allergies you may have.

Operator requirements

- The therapist's hands should be cleaned before and after the procedure.
- The work area should be clean and tidy.
- Paper towels, paper strips, pillowcases and towels should be changed between clients.
- Soiled linen, towels and protective clothing should be washed and laundered using hot water and detergent.

Electrical muscle stimulation

Electrical muscle stimulation (EMS) has a number of uses. It is used by health professionals to prevent, or reduce muscle atrophy. Atrophy is the weakening and loss of muscle bulk and tone, which is usually experienced after surgery or injuries. Health professionals also use it as a means of increasing blood flow to muscles, increasing range of movement, increasing muscle strength, and enhancing muscle endurance. It is also used for pain management in muscle related pain, such as spastic, sore, or tight muscles.

Recently, the fitness industry has promoted EMS for muscle toning results.

Electrical muscle stimulation uses an outside electrical source that stimulates the nerves to send signals to your muscle to relax and contract.

This is done by sending electrical currents through self-adhesive electrodes placed over the muscle.

There is a risk of infection if the electrodes become contaminated.

Operator requirements

- The electrodes should be cleaned with a cloth using warm water and detergent, rinsed and dried after each client use.
- After the electrodes have been cleaned of contaminants, the operator should disinfect the electrodes by wiping with a solution of 70% alcohol and drying them using a lint free cloth.

For further information contact your local council health department or the Communicable Disease Control Unit of the Department of Human Services on 1300 651 160.

www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas

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5. Physical therapies

Under the current Health Act (1958) the following practices do not require registration with local government. The information provided relates to general hygiene in minimising the risk and the spread of potentially harmful microorganisms that may lead to infection. Adoption of the outlined information is encouraged.

5.1 Massage

In performing various massage therapies, the operator needs to assess all possible infection risks and to consult their professional organisation. See the following sections for appropriate procedures to reduce the potential for the transmission of infection:

- hands—see part A, section 3.3
- surfaces—see part A, section 4.2.2
- linen—see part A, section 2.3.5
- oils/creams—see part A, section 2.5.

5.2 Solaria

Guidelines for the installation, maintenance and operation of solaria are outlined in AS/NZS 2635:2002 Solaria for cosmetic purposes. The standard seeks to increase the levels of safety associated with the use of solaria. The Department of Human Services recommends compliance. The following are key requirements of the standard.

5.2.1 Age limit

It is recommended that an operator does not allow an individual under the age of 18 years to use a sun-tanning unit without parental or guardian consent. Any individual under the age of 15 years is strictly not permitted.

5.2.2 Warning notices

Commercial premises should place one or more notices (of A4-size paper) presenting the following information (in legible print) within the immediate view of every client entering the premises and in each sun-tanning unit cubicle.

- Exposure to ultraviolet radiation from a sun-tanning unit contributes to the skin-ageing process and may cause skin cancer.
- People with fair skin and who are unable to tan should not use a sun-tanning unit.
- Intentional exposure to sunlight or a sun-tanning unit should be avoided for 48 hours after sun-tanning exposure.
- Protective goggles should be worn at all times while undergoing sun-tanning unit exposure.
- Age restrictions as discussed above.

5.2.3 Client consent form

Prior to the commencement of tanning sessions, the solarium operator should hand a consent form (appendix A of AS/NZS 2635:2002) to the client. This consent form advises clients of the first four points under part B, section 5.2.2 and also of risks of certain medical conditions and medications.

The solarium operator should ensure the following practices.

- The client signs and dates the form.
- The client returns the signed and dated form before the commencement of the first tanning session in the premises.
- The original signed and dated form is filed in the records of the premises for a period of not less than two years.
- A copy of the signed and dated form is handed to the client.

5.2.4 Measurements

The standard recommends that measurement of ultraviolet radiation levels of solaria occur immediately after the commissioning or replacement of any item of sun-tanning equipment that is not to the original manufacturer's specification. It is therefore important to use only items of equipment (including lamps) that comply with the manufacturer's specifications.

5.2.5 Maximum exposure times

The standard has technical exposure limits based on various skin types. These ensure no individual suffers erythema (skin reddening) as a result of ultraviolet exposure in a solarium.

5.2.6 Maximum repeat exposure

Repeat exposures should not be undertaken sooner than 48 hours after the previous exposure.

5.2.7 Promotion

Claims of noncosmetic health benefits should not be made in the promotion of sun-tanning unit use.

5.2.8 Skin type exclusion

Individuals with skin type 1 (fair skin that always burns, never tans and is often accompanied by red hair and freckles) should not be allowed to use a sun-tanning unit.

5.2.9 Hygiene

Any part of a surface of a sun-tanning unit that is subject to body contact, including protective goggles, should be either cleaned and disinfected or, if disposable, completely replaced after the solarium unit has been used by any individual (see part A, section 4.2.2).

5.2.10 Supervision

In commercial premises, all sun-tanning unit use by any client of the premises should be subject to supervision by a trained operator at all times.

5.2.11 Solarium operator training

Any individual who is supervising the operation of a solarium or sun-tanning unit should be properly trained in the following:

- requirements of the standard and their practical implementation
- the proper determination of skin types and exposure times
- the proper screening for potential exposure limiting conditions
- emergency procedures in case of overexposure to ultraviolet light
- the types and wavelength of ultraviolet light
- proper procedures for cleaning and disinfecting protective eyewear and tanning equipment.

5.2.12 Unstaffed, coin-operated premises

Unsupervised, self-service solariums do not meet the standard and therefore are not recommended for use.

5.3 Saunas

The main infection risk relates to the surfaces of the sauna. Operators should ensure surfaces are kept clean. Only nonabrasive cleaners should be used (see part A, section 4.2.2). Clients should be encouraged to use a clean towel for sitting or lying on while using the sauna. If the operator provides towels, they should be handled accordingly once used (see part A, section 2.3.5).

5.4 Flotation tanks

The main infection risk for flotation tanks is the salt water that is reused between clients. Operators should ensure both internal and external surfaces are kept clean, using nonabrasive cleaners to remove scum and to prevent corrosion caused by splashing of the highly concentrated salt water (see part A, section 4.2.2). Regular maintenance should include checking the filters.

When applying oils or creams to protect the skin from the concentrated salt water, appropriate dispensing procedures should be used (see part A, section 2.5).

5.5 Spas and pools

Pools and spas are required to comply with the Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 2001, part 7 (public spa pools and public swimming pools).

5.6 Gymnasium equipment

Daily cleaning of the gymnasium environment and its equipment is important to prevent the spread of infection and provide a safe environment for users and staff. Additional cleaning is required immediately when and where any person has sweated profusely.

Bacteria such as *Staphylococcus aureus* (golden staph) can cause conjunctivitis and skin infections when transferred from inadequately cleaned equipment and reusable towels. The spread of infection is assisted by the reuse of a single towel for cleaning and by the use of the gymnasium user's own towel to wipe down equipment. Supplied reusable towels should be used only once and placed in a receptacle for laundering (see part A, section 2.3.5).

The following cleaning equipment should be readily available for gymnasium users or staff:

- a solution of warm water and detergent in a pour bottle
- paper towels for cleaning and drying equipment

There should be a receptacle for the disposal of used paper towels. Facilities should be available for users and staff to wash their hands after cleaning or wiping down equipment (see part A, sections 2.3.1).

5.7 Alternative therapies

There is an abundance of alternative therapies, including naturopathy, aromatherapy, homeopathy and ear candling. It is important for the operator to consider all possible infection risks and, if possible, consult their professional organisation. If those therapies consist of procedures that penetrate the skin then premises must be registered and guidelines for skin penetration (part B, section 2) should be followed. See the following sections for appropriate procedures to reduce the potential for infection transmission:

- hands—see part A, section 3.3
- surfaces—see part A, section 4.2.2
- linen—see part A, section 2.3.5
- oils/creams—see part A, section 2.5.

- Know and comply with all relevant rules, laws and regulations of your council, state and country.
- A therapist should not discriminate against colleagues or clients.
- A therapist should not deliberately mislead a client seeking advice.
- The clinic must be clean, neat and professionally presented to reflect the profession of aromatherapy.
- Maintain physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.
- All practitioners should maintain active participation in professional associations and should pursue continuing education and training.
- Maintain a professional dress code.

Sanitary Practices

In the health care profession every precaution must be taken to protect the health of the clients as well as the health of the therapist.

The nature of the health care profession determines the procedures for the extent of sanitisation and sterilisation. For example, an acupuncturist will need to ensure that acupuncture needles and equipment are sterilised by autoclaving. A beauty therapist must apply products with sterilised applicators. An aromatherapist does not have the same kind of implements or have a need for the same sanitation procedures; however, appropriate and recommended procedures should be adhered to.

Contagious diseases, skin infections and other problems can be caused by the transfer of infectious material by unclean hands and nails and by unsanitary equipment and supplies. One of the primary precautions in infection control is thorough hand washing. You should wash your hands before and after each aromatherapy session.

You should also ensure that any items that come into contact with a client are clean and sanitised. Supplies such as towels, blankets and sheets should be clean and fresh for each client. After each use, towels should be laundered in hot water. If there is a concern that the towels have been contaminated, add a few drops of lavender or tea tree to the wash water.

Safety Practices

Aromatherapy does not involve the use of hazardous equipment or practices; however, there are still safety issues that the aromatherapist must keep in

mind. Safety is an attitude put into practice with the focus on the prevention of situations and the elimination of conditions that may lead to injury of the therapist or the client. Safety considerations should focus on:²

- the premises
- equipment
- fire safety
- first aid
- therapist safety
- client safety.

The Premises

The premises includes the building that houses the clinic, the equipment and the space within the clinic. Safety precautions in the premises include:³

- keep all halls and walkways clear
- keep all carpets vacuumed and clean
- keep all solid floors cleaned and sanitised
- sanitise all bathing facilities
- make sure all floors in wet areas are slip-proof
- sanitise all equipment that is exposed to the client (table surfaces, linen etc.)
- maintain hand-washing facilities (soap, sanitised towels).

Equipment

- each time a massage table is set up, check all the hinges and check the table for stability
- maintain all equipment
- store equipment and linen properly.

Fire Safety

- be familiar with the location and use of fire extinguishers
- clearly indicate fire exits
- be aware of evacuation procedures
- establish a policy regarding the use of open flames, candles and oil vaporisers.

First Aid

- keep a maintained first aid kit on the premises
- make sure all personnel know the location of the first aid kit
- as many staff as possible should learn first aid and CPR techniques.

Therapist Safety

- When lifting equipment or clients, use proper lifting techniques to prevent muscle strain and injury.²
- Maintain a good posture when practising massage to prevent muscle strain and overuse syndromes which may result in back, shoulder or arm injury.²
- Use equipment according to manufacturers' instructions and recommendations.²
- Know the location of the first aid kit.²
- Wash your hands before and after every treatment.²
- Know contra-indications for aromatherapy massage and perform procedures that cause no injury and are within your scope of practice.

Client Safety

- Understand the cause of infection and assure clients' protection with sanitary practices such as:²
 - a. use clean linen with each client
 - b. wash hands before and after each client
 - c. provide sanitary bathing facilities and restrooms
 - d. avoid open wounds and sores
 - e. do not practise massage if you have a contagious illness.
- Provide safe, clear entrances and passages by keeping walkways clear and well-lit, providing non-skid walkways and floor surfaces.²
- When necessary, assist client on and off the massage table.²
- Check to make sure that client is not sensitive or allergic to products that you will be using.
- Use proper procedures in dealing with illness and injury.

Supplies and Equipment

Each room should have the appropriate furnishings and equipment for the treatments to be given. All supplies must be kept in a clean, sanitised condition. Supplies such as oils and linen should be ready before the client enters the room.

The following is a checklist of equipment and supplies generally needed for an aromatherapy clinic.

Room equipment

Supply and linen cabinets
 Chairs
 Massage table
 Stool
 Pillows
 Sheets
 Towels
 Bathroom scales
 Indirect lighting
 Desk or table
 Clothes hangers
 Small table
 Clock
 Covered rubbish bin

Therapy equipment

Anatomical charts
 Bathroom scales
 Foot basin
 Cotton for facial cleansing
 Cotton-tipped swabs
 Client record cards
 Alcohol or other sterilising agents
 Measuring cylinders
 Funnels
 Small mixing bowls
 Storage cabinet
 Bowls for preparing compresses
 Tissues
 Oil burners

Supplies

Essential oils
 Carrier oils
 Ointment or cream base
 Empty glass and plastic bottles
 Glass jars
 Blank labels
 Floral waters

There may be other items that you wish to add to this list.

Setting up a Clinic

Clinic Space

An aromatherapy treatment room should be approximately 3 metres by 4 metres. This will allow enough space for all needed equipment as well as enough room to move around the table.

It should also allow enough space for a desk, chair and a supply cabinet. It is handy to have a stool in the massage room, because there are times when you can sit down while working on the client's neck, face, feet or hands. Sitting down for a few minutes can provide a much-needed rest when working long hours.

Temperature

The temperature of the treatment room should be comfortable. The room should be warm enough so that the client does not feel a chill. If a client becomes cold, it is very difficult to relax.

The room should also be adequately ventilated. Poor ventilation causes the room to become stuffy and the air may acquire an overwhelming odour. Proper ventilation ensures an abundance of fresh air.

Lighting

It is difficult for the practitioner or the client to be comfortable when lighting in the room is too bright. Reflective or soft natural light is preferred. Dimmer switches will enable you to reduce the intensity of the lighting. Avoid direct overhead lighting or any light that can shine directly into the client's eyes.

Music

Soothing music can provide another sensory dimension to a relaxing aromatherapy massage. While you may find the ambience that the music creates soothing, please remember to ask your client what he or she prefers. Some people find it distracting and prefer absolute quiet. Music may be useful in masking outside noise which is distracting.

The Massage Table

Your massage table should be stable, firm and comfortable. If you travel to do treatments, you may prefer a table that is portable. The table should not shake, rock or squeak.

The table should be the correct height to give you the leverage needed to prevent fatigue of your back, neck, arms, and shoulders. One way of testing the optimum height of your table is to place the palm of your hand flat on the table. While doing this, you should be able to hold your arm straight at your side.

Ensure that the width of your table will give enough arm support for larger clients. The padding on the table should be firm so that the pressure applied by the therapist to the client is absorbed by the client's body and not pushed into the table. A face cradle is extremely valuable for the comfort of the client.

Business Skills

Starting your own clinic

As the demand for preventative medicine increases, there will be opportunities for professional therapists. Whether you decide to establish your work as an employee, it is important to understand the responsibilities associated with business. The therapist who understands business practices is more likely to succeed or she will be more aware of the challenges associated in being self-employed.

Unfortunately, being a good therapist is not good enough to succeed in business. It is not knowing how to do aromatherapy treatments, but knowing how to make money from them. Many therapists fail because they have not recognized an important difference.

Many business failures are due to management problems. You must know your strengths and weaknesses. Take an honest and personal look at your business idea and the chances of success in the marketplace. Honesty is the key. At the end, if you fool anyone it will be yourself.

Keep an open mind in your business. It will not be easy, especially if this has been your dream. However, you must have a realistic appraisal of your chances of success.

The Profile of a Successful Business Owner

Like most other people in small business, you are hoping to earn a better living and enjoy the freedom of being your own boss. However, the responsibilities will at times seem insurmountable, long hours and hard work required in becoming your own boss.

How do you know whether you are ready for business or not? Are there any characteristics that guarantee success? We have compiled a checklist that, if properly completed, will indicate failure an impossibility, many studies have shown that certain personality traits are common to anyone in small business. These are:

- desire to achieve
- motivation
- technically competent
- good judgement
- intelligent
- courage
- initiative
- self-confidence

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Massage Therapy and Drug Resistant Staph Infections

As harmful bacteria grow and change over time, they become more and more resistant to commonly used antibiotics. Are they only dangerous in hospital settings, or do massage therapists in private practice need to be concerned as well?

by Linda Fehrs, LMT

Commonly referred to as "staph," the bacteria *Staphylococcus aureus* (*S. aureus*, is found just about everywhere on the human body as well as on dry surfaces, such as doorknobs and countertops). Most of the time the human body's natural defenses easily fight off any potential infection. Sometimes though, the presence of *S. aureus* can lead to serious infection that resists treatment.

Bacterial staph infections are nothing new. They have been around since the beginning of time. The use of various natural substances - such as garlic, honey or certain mosses - to fight infection has been around for more than 3,000 years. But, the role bacteria plays in the spreading of infection has really only been understood by the medical profession for less than 300 years.

Whether it is from our own overuse of modern antibiotics, or the routine use of prophylactic antibiotics used in animal feed, many types of bacteria have evolved to become resistant to a large number of commonly prescribed antibiotics used to treat infections.

There are two forms of antibiotic resistant to staph bacteria:

1. HA-MRSA (Healthcare Associated - Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus*): HA-MRSA is rarely found outside the hospital setting, is highly resistant to most antibiotics and first appeared in the 1950s.

2. CA-MRSA (Community Associated - MRSA): It was recently discovered that another strain of MRSA was being found in non-hospital settings, such as nursing homes, prisons and athletic facilities. This form is differentiated by the designation CA-MRSA and is considered to be a highly communicable community-acquired infection that, though serious, more readily responds to treatment than HA-MRSA.

At Risk Populations

Certain populations are more susceptible than others to MRSA related infections, and it would not be unusual to see massage clients from these populations:

- Persons with weakened immune systems, such as those with **HIV/AIDS**, **hepatitis** and rheumatoid arthritis, as well as cancer patients
- Diabetics
- Young children
- The elderly
- Patients and staff staying or working in a healthcare facility for an extended time, such as nursing homes
- Persons confined or restricted in confined spaces, such as prisoners
- Athletes, particularly those involved in contact sports or weight training

Transmission

MRSA can be transmitted two ways:

1. through direct infection and

2. through toxins that the bacteria produce.

Direct infection is responsible for skin infections which may start when the bacteria enters through some sort of break in the skin. This could be a cut, an insect bite or rash. Toxins can be introduced through the ingestion of improperly prepared or stored food, especially dairy based sauces, salad dressings and pastries.

The MRSA bacteria can live on inanimate objects for hours, days and even months depending on several factors: including the type of surface, the general environment and the amount of germs present. They can be spread from one person to another through contaminated linens, massage tabletops and other materials found in a massage practice, as well as from personal contact with an infected person.

Avoiding MRSA

Preventing MRSA is much easier than fighting it once an infection occurs. While MRSA is resistant to antibiotics, it is easily removed by using simple cleaning methods. You may also want to follow the basic rules of universal precautions, the same methods we learn in working with clients who may be immunocompromised by HIV/AIDS.

- One of the best ways to combat MRSA is by washing your hands with warm soap and water before and after each client as well as after changing massage linens.
- Wipe down the massage table before and after each client.
- Never use massage linens for more than one client. Remove and wash linens within 24 hours of each use.
- If you have a cut on your finger, make sure it is covered when working with a client. Use a finger cot in addition to a bandage to avoid contamination.
- Keep your office, treatment room and bathroom facilities clean. Have a cleaning regimen that includes the wiping down of any surfaces that may come in contact with skin, including tabletops, water coolers and sinks.
- Any open wound on a client is an area of precaution and should not be worked on directly or in the surrounding area. If working in an adjacent area, make sure the wound is covered and that you do not come into direct contact with it.

What Does MRSA Look Like?

Will you know if a client has CA-MRSA? Just looking at an infected sore will not tell you that the bacteria involved is antibiotic resistant. The only way to determine with accuracy is for the client to be seen by a doctor and have the site analyzed. It is imperative to get to medical facilities quickly as this particular type of infection can spread rapidly and, if left untreated, can cause a great deal of damage.

In the initial stages, an MRSA infection can look like a small pimple or insect bite. Within a short time it may take on the appearance of a larger boil, surrounded by reddened skin and may be accompanied by fever and/or a rash. Left unattended the infection can lead to systemic infection, toxic shock or even necrotizing fasciitis. Any open wound that does not heal, appears inflamed and/or develops pus should be looked at by a physician as soon as possible.

To Bleach Or Not to Bleach

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) it is not necessary to use hot water and bleach to kill MRSA on inanimate surfaces. The CDC claims that laundry washed in detergent and the warmest water recommended for that particular fabric is sufficient for removing possible contamination by MRSA. As a general disinfectant the CDC recommends using an EPA-registered product rather than bleach. If that is not available, chlorine bleach, which is a broad-spectrum disinfectant, can be a useful alternative. Do not use bleach full strength. Rather, use a solution equivalent to ¼ cup of bleach to one gallon of water, and never mix it with other cleaning agents.

There are many natural, environmentally friendly products on the market that have been shown to be effective as disinfectants. Vinegar is well known for its cleaning and disinfecting qualities (the smell does dissipate within a short time). There are also many essential oils that have antibacterial properties including tea tree oil and the oils of lemon, pine, chamomile, clove and thyme among others. Make sure you are familiar with the use of **essential oils** and their properties before creating any cleaning recipes on your own.

Maintaining a clean office in your practice is one of the best ways to assure that both you and your clients are safe from the spreading of germs or bacteria.

Recommended Study:

Advanced Anatomy and Pathology

Infectious Disease: Hepatitis

Infectious Disease: HIV/AIDS

Resources:

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