

4.3 Infection Prevention and Control

Adopted 10/2010, Revised and Effective 01/2014

To incorporate current, appropriate and generally accepted infection control measures as established by and updated from time-to-time by Health Canada¹ and Alberta Health and Wellness in their clinical practice, chiropractors must:

- Remain current in generally accepted routine practices² and infection control protocols relevant to their practice context
- Develop, incorporate and keep up-to-date, infection control policies to promote the use of infection control measures, which may be unique to their personal professional practice style
- Ensure that their clinic facility is equipped, operated and maintained to meet generally accepted infection control guidelines including requirements for:
 - hand hygiene, which must include the use of a hand cleaner or hand washing before and after each patient contact
 - use of protective barriers³ as standard practice whenever contact with blood and body fluids is likely to occur during patient contact. (Barriers must also be used when a patient's personal care equipment is likely to have been contaminated with potentially infected fluids (e.g., wheel chairs, walkers))
- Internal environment cleaning, disinfecting, and sterilizing equipment and facilities; and managing wastes and materials contaminated by blood or body fluids (see Appendix A) as may be relevant to their particular practice context
- Adopt appropriate infection control measures including contact management protocols (and continually monitor their use and effectiveness to identify problems, outcomes and trends)
- Provide infection prevention and control training for clinic staff and monitor implementation of IPC procedures and activities
- Conduct ongoing assessments of current risks of infection and transmission to patients, staff, colleagues and other health professionals, and take appropriate remedial action in a timely manner consistent with professional requirements and the applicable law based on consideration of the following:
 - the assessments of treatment interventions planned or conducted
 - the health conditions of patients being assessed or treated
 - the degree of infection risk currently present in the internal practice environment
 - the degree of infection risk currently present in the external practice environment
 - current best practice in infection control protocols relevant to his or her professional practice style
 - the health and immunization status of the chiropractor, the staff and all other individuals in the practice environment
- Consider the necessity of self-immunization for common and/or preventable illness as appropriate, and based on the outcome of this consideration ensure that appropriate action is taken in a timely manner to ensure patients are properly protected from diseases while being treated

- Screen for symptoms of infectious diseases and segregate those patients from others
- Utilize appropriate personal protective equipment in circumstances indicating such measures
- Report reportable communicable diseases to their public health unit

¹Health Canada 1999 Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Health Care. Infection Control Guidelines, Canada Communicable Disease Report, Volume 25S4, Health Canada Standards.

²Routine Practices: Defined by Health Canada, form the foundation for limiting the transmission of microorganisms in all health care settings and is the generally accepted level of care for all clients. Elements of routine practice are: hand hygiene; risk assessment related to client symptoms; care and service delivery including screening for infectious diseases; risk reduction strategies through the use of PPE; cleaning of environment, laundry, disinfection and sterilization of equipment; waste management, safe sharps handling; client placement and healthy workplace practices; and education of health care providers, clients, families and visitors.

³Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Specialized equipment or clothing used by health care workers to protect themselves from direct exposure to clients' blood, tissue or body fluids. Personal protective equipment may include gloves, gowns, fluid-resistant aprons, head and foot coverings, face shields or masks, eye protection, and ventilation devices (i.e. mouthpieces, respirator bags, pocket masks).

Appendix A

Common Definitions

- **Infection Control:** Measures practiced by health care practitioners intended to prevent spread, transmission and acquisition of agents or pathogens between patients, from health care practitioners to patients and from patients to health care practitioners in the health care setting. These measures are determined after an assessment of the facility and of the patient population. Infection control measures instituted are based on how an infectious agent is transmitted and include standard, contact, droplet and airborne precautions.
- **Cleaning:** Involves the physical removal of foreign material such as dust, soil and organic material including blood, secretions, excretions and micro-organisms. Cleaning physically removes rather than kills micro-organisms. Removal of material is necessary to permit the effective disinfection or sterilization of equipment. It is accomplished with water, detergents and mechanical, scrubbing action. The terms "decontamination" and "sanitation" may be used for this process in certain settings. Cleaning reduces or eliminates the reservoirs of potential pathogenic organisms. Cleaning agents are the most common chemicals used in housekeeping activities.
- **Disinfection:** The inactivation of disease producing micro-organisms. Disinfection does not destroy bacterial spores. Disinfection usually involves chemicals, heat or ultraviolet light. Varying levels of disinfection have been recommended based upon the nature of the procedure, infection risk and type of equipment. Disinfectants are used on inanimate objects while antiseptics are used on living tissue.
- **Sterilization:** Involves a multi-step process that results in the destruction of all forms of microbial life including bacteria, viruses, spores and fungi. Items must be cleaned thoroughly before effective sterilization can take place. The decision to sterilize equipment is based upon the procedure, risk of infection and the type of equipment. Various methods of sterilization exist, the most common include steam and heat (autoclave), dry heat (dry heat sterilizer) or chemicals. Monitoring the effectiveness of sterilization procedures is essential. Monitoring can be achieved through the use of biologic, chemical and mechanical methods.

- **External practice environment:** Any locale beyond the internal practice environment, and may extend to municipal, provincial, national or international borders depending on the nature of the infection risk being considered.
- **Internal practice environment:** The physical location(s) where chiropractic services may be provided to patients. These physical locations can include not only the chiropractor's private practice facilities/clinics, but also could include hospitals, athletic venues, and patients' homes.