

Use of masks in the massage therapy setting

My mask protects you



Your mask protects me

Infection control refers to policies and procedures practised in healthcare facilities to minimise the risk of transmitting and acquiring infectious diseases. Source control is a term used to describe measures that are intended to prevent infected individuals from spreading disease. In the massage therapy clinical setting, the main rationale for practitioners to wear a mask is related to source control – to reduce the likelihood of transmitting a virus to the client.

The principle behind masks as source control is to limit the amount of infectious particles that are put out into the air by breathing, talking and coughing etc - the aim is to minimise the amount of free floating droplets in the environment.

Source control can also be applied to clients and staff of a clinic.

Types of masks

N95 or P2 respirator masks

An N95 respirator is a tight-fitting protective device designed to achieve a very close facial fit and filter out a high percentage of the smallest airborne particles and droplets. They provide the highest level of protection for health professionals working with infected patients.

AMT does not recommend the use of N95 respirators when treating. Do not wear a mask with an exhalation valve.

Masks with an exhalation valve will expose clients (and the environment generally) to potentially infectious droplets.

Therapists should consider using an N95 mask for cleaning and disinfection of the clinic environment between clients, to protect from droplets generated during cleaning. Please be aware that some N95 masks are single use only - read the manufacturer's guidelines for appropriate care of your mask and replace the mask as recommended. If you must reuse your mask several times during the day, follow meticulous [donning and doffing](#), including hand hygiene to prevent soilage and contamination. In between uses, the mask should be carefully stored to prevent potential cross contamination of other surfaces.

Surgical masks

A surgical mask is a loose-fitting, disposable device that creates a physical barrier between the mouth and nose of the wearer and potential contaminants in the immediate environment. They provide some barrier protection against droplets that may carry infectious diseases. Although they do not offer airtight protection to the wearer due to leakage around the edges of the mask during inhalation, they do help to prevent transmission from the wearer to others in close proximity.

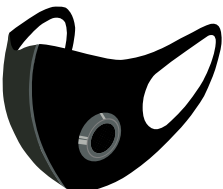
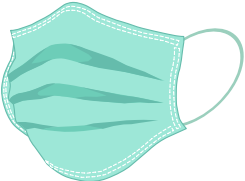

Surgical masks are often referred to as facemasks, although not all facemasks are regulated whereas surgical masks are.

In areas where there is community transmission of COVID-19 occurring, massage therapists must wear surgical masks that are [TGA approved](#) as part of transmission based precautions.

Surgical masks are single use only and should be changed between clients.

Reusable cloth masks

Like surgical masks, cloth masks offer some barrier protection but will not filter out small particles. However, it is important to note that homemade cloth facemasks are not considered personal protective equipment (PPE). Although the evidence for cloth masks as source control in general community settings is now quite strong, there is not enough evidence yet to support their routine use by practitioners in healthcare settings. The lack of standardised manufacturing and composition makes it difficult to test their efficacy and utility for clinical use. Experimental and clinical evidence may help to establish recognised standards for the manufacture of cloth masks that perform comparably with TGA-approved surgical masks but, until there is an agreed standard, it is not possible to make a generalised endorsement for their use in the clinic setting.

Type	Protection for wearer	Protection for others	Uses
N95 with valve 	Yes	No	Correct fit essential. Medical use only, when dealing with confirmed infections.
Surgical mask 	Some	Yes	TGA approved. Single use product. Suitable for community health care settings, like massage therapy clinics.
Cloth mask 	Some	Yes	3 layer, washable. If laundered daily according to accepted NHMRC standards , they may be adequate risk mitigation in areas where there is no community transmission of COVID-19.

Face Shields

It is not known if face shields provide any benefit as source control to protect others from the spray of respiratory particles. If face shields are used as PPE in the clinic setting, they must be worn with a surgical mask to prevent the downward stream of respiratory droplets toward the client.

Donning and doffing

[Watch this video](#) for a brief demonstration of how to don and doff a face mask.

1. Wash your hands with soap or sanitise with alcohol-based hand rub before touching the mask.
2. Using the ear loops or ties, place the mask over your nose and mouth, and adjust the nose piece so the mask fits comfortably and securely.
3. Avoid touching the mask. If you do touch the mask or it becomes damp, replace it.
4. To take off the mask, wash your hands and carefully remove the mask from behind by the ear loops or straps.
5. Wash your hands again.