

Speech Pathology Tasmania’s Covid Safety Plan

This plan outlines the steps SPT will take to keep team members and clients safe and limit the spread of Covid-19 as we return to the clinic and resume offsite face-to-face therapy sessions.

Following the advice of WorkSafe Tasmania, this Covid Safety Plan addresses:

1. Working from home
2. Physical distancing
3. Handwashing & Hygiene
4. Cleaning
5. Monitoring Symptoms
6. Planning Ahead

Contents

1. Working from home	2
Returning to the clinic	2
Client health and safety for face to face appointments	2
Offsite sessions – school and home visits	3
2. Physical distancing	4
Entering the clinic	4
While in the clinic	4
Contactless payments	5
3. Handwashing & Hygiene	6
Sanitising stations & cleaning supplies	6
Hygiene during therapy sessions	6
Speech Pathology Australia recommendations	7
Close-proximity work	7
Using toys in therapy	7
Communication about cleaning and hygiene measures	7
4. Cleaning	8
Increased cleaning	8
Team members’ responsibilities	8
Further measures	8
5. Monitoring symptoms	9
6. Planning ahead	10
Supporting resources:	10

1. Working from home

Therapists are encouraged to continue working from home where possible. Returning to the clinic will take place gradually. The number of people in the clinic will be limited.

Arrangements for limiting the number of people in the clinic will include:

- a staggered return by therapists rather than all returning at once
- a mix of working from home and in the clinic
- continuing teleconference appointments for some clients when therapists return to the clinic
- when more than two admin staff are working the third team member may work from home or in an unoccupied therapy room

Returning to the clinic

Team members may come back to the clinic to work. This will be decided in consultation with the Director. Team members will understand the need for:

- gradual return of the entire team
- staggered-return staffing arrangements
- capacity limits within the building
- physical distancing measures.

When returning to the clinic team members are encouraged to:

- make sure they have read and understood SPT's Covid Safety Plan and any updates
- follow all relevant steps outlined in the plan
- download the CovidSafe app and update it as necessary
- know the symptoms of Covid-19
- stay home if sick
- follow the steps outlined in the 'Monitoring symptoms' and 'Planning Ahead' sections below if they feel unwell

Therapists are also encouraged to read the current version of [Speech Pathology Australia's document 'Guidance for Service Delivery during Covid'](#). (Last updated 27 July 2020)

Client health and safety for face to face appointments

It is important that clients do not attend face to face appointments if they:

- are unwell
- are self-isolating
- have travelled interstate or overseas in the past two weeks.

We ask clients to let us know by phone or email if they are unable to attend. We will then offer for the appointment to take place via telepractice where possible.

Clients who are immuno-compromised or who do not feel comfortable with face to face sessions can ask their therapist to wear a mask. Clients with hearing impairments or who need to see the therapist's mouth to be able to understand can ask the therapist to wear a clear mask. Clients can also ask a therapist to wear a clear mask if they do not feel comfortable with the therapist's face being covered by a regular mask.

We encourage clients to discuss with us any concerns they may have about health and safety during sessions.

Offsite sessions – school and home visits

Therapists may start visiting clients at home gradually. This will be decided in consultation with the Director.

It is important that clients let us know before a home visit if anyone in the household:

- is unwell
- is self-isolating
- has travelled interstate or overseas in the past two weeks.

We ask clients to let us know at least 24 hours before the appointment. Therapists will not visit if anyone in the household is unwell, self-isolating, or has travelled recently. The therapist may ask the client these same questions when they arrive for the appointment.

Therapists may discuss distancing & hygiene measures with the client before resuming home or school visits. These measures may include:

- avoiding hugging and handshaking
- keeping 1.5m distance between people
- handwashing before and after the session
- disinfecting any resources used in the session

Therapists will have a Covid safety kit with them. The kit will have sanitiser and protective equipment to use if close-up work is needed. More details are listed in the 'handwashing & hygiene' section below.

At the end of a home visit therapists are encouraged to:

- wash hands or use sanitiser
- wipe down any resources used
- wipe down any personal belongings taken into the home/school. These may include bags, phones, sunglasses.
- wipe their car door handle, steering wheel and keys
- store any single-use protective equipment used such as gloves or masks in a sealed zip lock bag until it can be disposed of.

2. Physical distancing

Entering the clinic

To avoid getting too close in our building's narrow spaces we're temporarily changing our entry and exits.

- We ask anyone coming into the clinic to enter through the door in the laneway off Melville St and exit out the street-front door onto Elizabeth St.
- Clients with prams or wheelchairs, or who have mobility issues that need to avoid stairs may still exit through the laneway door.
- The Elizabeth St door will be locked with a sign directing people to the back entrance. The Elizabeth St door can be opened from the inside so people can use it to exit while it's locked from the outside. This means it can still be used for emergency exit also.
- There will be a hand sanitising station at the entry.
- Deliveries will be made at the rear entrance. Items are to be left in the new delivery cupboard outside the door. We will give directions to delivery people when placing orders. There will also be a notice on the Elizabeth St door.

We will tell clients about these changes in an email or on the phone before they return to the clinic. There will also be a notice on the entry & exit doors.

While in the clinic

- We ask that clients bring only one guardian or support person with them to each appointment. (For example, one parent with a child but no siblings please).
- Everyone entering the clinic is advised to keep 1.5m between themselves and others when possible. We will avoid handshaking and hugging. We encourage parents to demonstrate and practice this with their children before returning to the clinic.
- Therapists might sometimes need to be closer to clients during sessions to perform some therapy tasks. Some up-close procedures may need to be postponed. There are more details about this in the section below called 'Hygiene during therapy sessions'.
- Therapists may change the layout of their therapy room to ensure distancing during sessions where practical.
- Please note capacity limits for each room. Rooms might have signs displayed stating how many people can be in that room.
- The reception and waiting areas will have markings on the floor to show where to stand or sit.
- Non-admin team members are asked not to enter the admin zone behind reception desk. Please ask admin staff for assistance.

Contactless payments

We prefer that billing for appointments continue electronically where possible. We will keep sending invoices and receipts by email. We prefer that clients pay by direct deposit online or by credit card over the phone. NDIS clients do not need to sign anymore. We may notify clients of these arrangements in an email. There will also be a poster displayed at reception.

If a client needs to pay in person, contactless payments are preferred. To keep our distance while payments are being made at reception we will follow these steps:

- admin staff will place the EFTPOS machine at the front of the reception desk so clients can reach it while standing back from the reception desk
- admin staff will avoid handling client cards wherever possible. Clients will be asked to tap/swipe cards themselves, and read to admin staff the numbers needed from private health cards
- clients will be asked to take the EFTPOS receipt from the machine rather than admin staff passing it to the client
- all other receipts will be emailed unless a printed copy is specifically requested
- EFTPOS machine will be sanitised with a disinfectant wipe immediately after each use
- signatures will no longer be required for private health transactions

3. Handwashing & Hygiene

Sanitising stations & cleaning supplies

Everyone who comes into the clinic is encouraged to use the hand sanitiser at the entry before coming inside.

Hand sanitiser will be available:

- at the building entrance
- at reception
- in each therapy room

Disinfectant wipes will be provided:

- at the entrance for people to use when opening the door
- to team members to use at their workstation

Therapists will be provided with offsite kits to use in their car and when visiting homes and schools. The kit may contain:

- hand sanitiser
- disinfectant wipes
- gloves
- masks
- zip lock bags to store used items until they can be safely discarded.

The kitchen and bathroom will be kept well stocked with soap and paper towel. We will use paper towel for drying hands.

Hygiene during therapy sessions

Clients will be notified of distancing and hygiene measures before entering the clinic.

Measures may include

- Staying 1.5m away from others
- Not hugging or handshaking
- Coughing or sneezing into the elbow
- Handwashing or using sanitiser before and after sessions

We encourage parents to demonstrate and practice these measures with their children before returning to the clinic.

If therapists notice a client coughing or sneezing during a session they may ask the client to put on a mask. The therapist might also put on a mask.

Therapists will wipe down affected surfaces in between clients.

Speech Pathology Australia recommendations

Therapists are encouraged to follow recommendations for specific therapy practices outlined in [SPA's Guidance for Service Delivery during Covid](#). Therapists are encouraged to read current versions of that document as they are updated.

Close-proximity work

Therapists are encouraged to consider whether close proximity work is absolutely necessary at this time. Some up-close-up work may need to be postponed. Gloves and masks will be supplied for use when close-up work is required.

Using toys in therapy

Therapists are encouraged to consider limiting the number of games/toys used during sessions. Toys that cannot be easily cleaned might not be used. These may include soft toys and toys with lots of parts. All toys used during a session will be cleaned thoroughly at the end of the session. The therapist will clean each toy with a disinfectant wipe and allow enough time for it to dry before the next use. If any toys need further cleaning they will be put in the appropriate container in the kitchen. Admin staff will wash and disinfect the contents of the container.

Communication about cleaning and hygiene measures

To help everyone understand what we're doing to keep us all safe we will display posters with important information. These posters may include:

- a poster in the bathroom displaying handwashing procedures
- posters at the clinic entry and in the waiting areas may include:
 - Please do not enter if you have experienced these symptoms...
 - Help us practice social distancing – please maintain 1.5m from others

To make sure we always have enough cleaning and hygiene supplies:

- therapists will notify admin staff when hand sanitiser and wipes in their room are running low or when anything in their offsite kit needs replenishing
- cleaning staff will notify admin when cleaning supplies need restocking
- admin staff will regularly check other supplies and re-order when necessary

4. Cleaning

Increased cleaning

To help stop the spread of the virus we are doing more cleaning of the clinic. This increased cleaning may involve:

- Cleaning of the SPT clinic will increase from twice weekly to daily during the pandemic. Special attention will be paid to high-contact areas such as door handles, light switches and surfaces.
- An itemised cleaning list will outline items in each room that need cleaning.
- The daily cleaning tasks done in each room will be recorded as they are completed.

Team members' responsibilities

Team members will sanitise their workspace at the end of each day and in between clients. This will be done using disinfectant wipes. Items to be wiped include:

- Keyboards
- computer mouse
- phone
- pens
- desktop
- other surfaces.

Therapists will discuss gym bookings with admin before arranging sessions to ensure adequate time for cleaning. Preferably gym use will be limited to one client/appointment per day. The gym will be cleaned by cleaning staff each evening.

Team members are encouraged to clean personal property brought into the clinic. This may include sanitising with disinfectant wipes items such as:

- mobile phones
- bags
- keys
- glasses
- lunch containers

Further measures

- Toys and books will be removed from the waiting area
- Digital record keeping is preferred to avoid the handling of paper files

5. Monitoring symptoms

Signs about the symptoms of Covid-19 will be displayed at the clinic entrance and reception.

Admin staff may ask clients some questions when they arrive. These questions might include:

- *Have you experienced any of these symptoms in the past 48hrs:*
 - *fever*
 - *cough*
 - *sore throat*
 - *shortness of breath*
- *Have you travelled interstate or overseas in the past 14 days?*

If the answer to any of those questions is yes, clients may be asked to leave the clinic. Appointments can be rescheduled over the phone or by email.

Steps to monitor symptoms in team members include:

- Team members are reminded to stay home if sick or experiencing any of the symptoms listed above.
- Team members displaying Covid-19 symptoms will call the Public Health Hotline 1800 671 738 and notify SPT's Office Manager
- Team members will also notify the Office Manager if they have been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed, or have been tested for Covid-19
- Team members who are required to self-quarantine but are not displaying symptoms of Covid-19 and feel well enough to work from home are encouraged to do so.
- Team members are encouraged to discuss with the Office Manager, leave entitlements if they are sick or required to self-quarantine. They are also encouraged to ask about flexible work arrangements.

6. Planning ahead

In the event of a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19 in the clinic we will take these steps:

If a team member feels unwell:

- The team member will notify admin & leave the building immediately
- The team member will arrange their own testing if necessary
- Team members who are tested for Covid-19 will self-isolate until they receive the results
- Admin will cancel all remaining in-clinic appointments for that day & the next day for all therapists. All appointments with the therapist concerned will be cancelled for the necessary time period.
- Other staff who have been in contact with the affected person will isolate until the unwell colleague's results are received.

If a Covid-19 diagnosis is confirmed:

- The team member diagnosed with Covid-19 will immediately notify admin
- Admin will immediately notify Public Health by phoning 1800 671 738
- The clinic will close immediately for cleaning
- Other team members in the clinic will self-isolate immediately & get tested
- Public Health will provide further instructions. These instructions may include steps for notifying clients who have been in contact with the affected person.

Supporting resources:

WorkSafe Tasmania [Covid Safe Workplaces Framework](#)

WorkSafe Tasmania [CHECKLIST-How to keep your workers safe and limit the spread of COVID](#)

Speech Pathology Australia [guidance for service delivery, clinical procedures and infection control during COVID-19 pandemic](#) Version 7: 27 July 2020

Safe Work Australia [Talking to clients about Covid-19](#)