
MECHANICAL NAIL DEBRIDEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

**Advisory for Members of the
College of Chiropodists of Ontario**

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College of Chiropodists of Ontario

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the requirement for Members to make many changes to the clinical environment as well as their use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Since the early stages of the pandemic, the Ministry of Health has recommended the removal of as many non-essential items and equipment from treatment rooms as possible, given the stringent requirements for environmental cleaning and disinfection. As a result, many Members discontinued the use of mechanical nail debridement (nail drilling) in their clinics.

In response to questions from Members and the public in regards to the use of nail drills during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the College has developed this advisory to its Members. In providing guidance to its Members regarding best practices for the use of nail drills in the clinical setting during the COVID-19 pandemic, the College is taking protective steps for both its Members and the public.

Clinical Environment / Engineering Controls

Studies have shown that large amounts of dust become airborne during nail drilling procedures and can be present in the air for hours after a clinical treatment. As a result, many Members use mechanical air ventilation or engineering controls (e.g. air purifiers, HEPA filtration, etc.) and/or drills with dust extraction (vacuum) or suppression (water spray) systems. The importance of the reduction of airborne contaminants has been heightened as a result of COVID-19.

Members must follow the College's [Infection Control Standard of Practice](#) in regards to cleaning the clinical environment, as well as Ministry of Health and Public Health recommendations related to COVID-19 cleaning and disinfection measures.

- Recommendation #1:** Members should use an air purification/filtration system in the clinical space(s) where nail drilling is being performed.
- Recommendation #2:** A dust extraction or suppression system should be used in conjunction with the air purification/filtration system. Vacuum extraction is preferable to spray suppression due to the introduction of moisture into the air and its impact on the effectiveness of masks (see more regarding PPE below).
- Recommendation #3:** Air purification filters should be cleaned and/or replaced as per the manufacturer's recommendations, or more frequently depending on the frequency of use of the nail drill.
- Recommendation #4:** Following the use of the nail drill, all patient-contact surfaces and horizontal surfaces in the clinical space should be cleaned and disinfected prior to another patient occupying the clinical space.

Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

COVID-19 has resulted in more stringent requirements for the use of PPE, even for routine procedures. PPE must be monitored and changed accordingly with the introduction of contaminants in the air, from both dust and dust suppression systems. Procedures within the

scope of practice of chiropodists and podiatrists are not considered aerosol generating medical procedures (AGMPs); however, contaminants and moisture introduced into the air have the potential to reduce the effectiveness of masks for both the practitioner and patient.

Members must follow the College's [Infection Control Standard of Practice](#) in regards to PPE, as well as Ministry of Health and Public Health recommendations related to COVID-19 PPE measures.

Recommendation #5: Members performing mechanical nail debridement with a dust extraction or suppression system should wear a surgical mask and eye protection (i.e. face shield, goggles, safety glasses, medical mask with shield) to reduce the exposure to aerosolized organisms during filing of nails. Masks should be changed following each use of the nail drill (or sooner if soiled or wet), and not re-used for subsequent patients.

Recommendation #6: Members performing mechanical nail debridement without a dust extraction or suppression system should wear an N95 mask and eye protection (i.e. face shield, goggles, safety glasses, medical mask with shield) to reduce the exposure to aerosolized organisms during filing of nails. Masks should be changed following each use of the nail drill (or sooner if soiled or wet), and not re-used for subsequent patients.

Recommendation #7: Patients undergoing nail drilling should wear a mask (surgical/medical grade or homemade cloth face covering) for their own protection. Patients should be advised by the Member that surgical/medical grade masks should be disposed of after use, and homemade face coverings/masks should be laundered once removed. Members may consider advising patients to bring an additional mask to switch out following nail drilling procedures.

Universal Masking

While under normal circumstances Members must continue to follow Universal Masking precautions – or wearing a mask ALWAYS – when mechanical nail debridement has occurred, the College advises Members and patients (where applicable) to remove and change their masks as outlined in Recommendations #5-7 above.

After use, masks are to be handled in a manner that minimizes the potential for cross-contamination. Members should review and follow [Recommended Steps for Putting On and Taking Off PPE](#). Members may consider posting the steps for mask removal in their office, to assist patients in the appropriate application and removal of masks.

Resources

- 1) Contaminants in human nail dust: an occupational hazard in podiatry?
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3937521/>
- 2) World at work: Evidence based risk management of nail dust in chiropodists and podiatrists:
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2078045/>
- 3) Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) – Universal Mask Use in Health Care:
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/ipac/faq-covid-19-universal-mask-use-health-care.pdf?la=en>
- 4) Ministry of Health – COVID-19 Operational Requirements: Health Sector Restart
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/operational_requirements_health_sector.pdf
- 5) College of Chiropodists of Ontario – Standards of Practice – Infection Control:
<https://www.cocoo.on.ca/pdf/standards/standard-infection.pdf>
- 6) Guide to Infection Prevention and Control in Personal Service Settings, 3rd edition:
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/G/2019/guide-ipac-personal-service-settings.pdf?la=en>