

The Oregon Board of Massage Therapists (OBMT) received many inquiries after the Governors press conference on April 23, 2020. The most common question is whether or not massage falls under the non-elective procedures the governor is now allowing. The short answer is no. The directive from the Governor does not allow massage.

The Governors Executive Order 20-10 Issued on March 20, 2020 proclaimed:

Prohibition on Elective and Non-urgent Procedures

1. Pursuant to ORS 433.441(3)(a), (b), (d) and (f), ORS 401.168(1), and ORS 401.188(1)-(3), I direct the following actions to conserve PPE and other health care resources for the state's COVID-19 emergency response:

a. No later than March 23, 2020, all elective and non-urgent procedures across all care settings that utilize PPE, including but not limited to, hospitals, ambulatory surgery centers, outpatient clinics (including community health clinics and student health centers), dental clinics, and veterinary clinics, shall be cancelled, or rescheduled no earlier than June 15, 2020, for the purpose of conserving and redirecting PPE for the state's COVID-19 emergency response.

b. A procedure or surgery is exempt from the limitations set forth in paragraph 1(a) of this Executive Order if a three-month delay in the procedure or surgery would put the patient at risk of irreversible harm. Criteria for determining whether irreversible harm exists include but are not limited to: (1) threat to the patient's life; (2) threat of irreversible harm to the patient's physical or mental health; (3) threat of permanent dysfunction of an extremity or organ system; (4) risk of metastasis or progression of staging; and (5) risk of rapidly worsening to severe symptoms (time sensitive).

c. Individuals and entities in other industries that utilize PPE, including but not limited to the commercial, construction, farming, and manufacturing sectors, are strongly encouraged to cancel or postpone non-essential uses of PPE during the ongoing state of emergency, so that equipment can be conserved and redirected to the state's COVID-19 response.

2. Nothing in paragraph 1 of this Executive Order prohibits the use of PPE to diagnose and treat COVID-19 cases.

3. No later than March 27, 2020, hospitals, ambulatory surgery centers, outpatient clinics (including community health clinics and student health centers), dental clinics, and veterinary clinics with surplus PPE supplies shall notify the state's PPE Coordinator by calling (971) 900-9952, and arrange for delivery of those surplus supplies to the PPE Coordinator.

During the Governors press conference on April 23, 2020, the Governor said, ***"...Hospitals, surgical centers, medical offices, and dental offices that meet those requirements will be able to resume non-urgent procedures on May 1."***

This does not include massage services which fall under Executive Order 20-12. That Executive Order was issued on March 23, 2020 and remains in effect.

There has also been inquiries regarding whether massage therapists will be able to practice soon and whether or not Massage will be in Phase one of the Governor's plan to re-open Oregon. The Governor's office, specifically the Deputy Health Care Policy Advisor has put together a workgroup comprised of massage therapists and representatives from the OBMT and others, for the purpose of developing guidelines for massage professionals when they are able to return to work. I will put something out to all Licensees as soon as that workgroup develops the guidelines. At this time there has been no date set for massage therapists to return to work. The workgroup has had one meeting. There will be more, possibly several more.

Based on the information and questions I am receiving, apparently somebody who was in that meeting has shared incomplete information. Just to be clear, at this time, there is no definitive directive or plan to return massage therapists to work and no date has been set. Any future plan is in the development phase and is in the early stages and subject to substantial change. Please allow the workgroup time to develop a plan that provides for the safety of all Oregonians.