



Important update on local COVID-19 restrictions for consultations in herbal practice

New guidance about the implementation of local COVID-19 restrictions in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Issued 21st October 2020

Introduction

Guidelines and legislation for possible restrictions on face-to-face herbal consultations are changing all the time, often with little warning. The situation is complicated by a continued lack of clarity and consistency, particularly as guidance between the devolved nations of the UK may no longer be aligned. Individual towns, cities and regions within each nation may also be subject to additional local restrictions and conditions. Many of these stipulations are now legally enforceable with substantial fixed-penalty fines being introduced. In addition to this there may be added periods of full lockdown (so called 'circuit-breaks' or 'fire breaks') where major restrictions on all services are imposed either locally or nationally. Travel between different areas may also be subject to additional restrictions.

The guidance provided here is appropriate at the time of issue, but may very rapidly become outdated as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves.

It is therefore vitally important for herbal practitioners who are offering face-to-face consultations to keep up to date with both national and local guidelines relating to provision of close contact services in their area. These will include advice for those working in holistic and well-being settings and the practice of complementary healthcare, including herbal medicine.

Advice for herbal practitioners in England

Recent updates to the guidance produced by the English Government relating to working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) state that from **12th October** there will be three local COVID alert levels which set out information for local authorities, residents and workers about what to do and how to manage the outbreak in their area

Level 1 (or Tier 1) – Local COVID alert level: medium

Close contact services, including herbal medicine, may usually still continue to be provided in a COVID-secure manner subject to any national and local COVID safety guidelines currently in force ^(1, 2, 4)

Other local or national restrictions may also apply ^(2, 3, 4)

Level 2 (or Tier 2) – Local COVID alert level: high

Close contact services, including herbal medicine, may usually still continue to be provided in a COVID-secure manner subject to any national and local COVID safety guidelines currently in force ^(1, 2, 5)

Other local or national restrictions may also apply ^(2, 3, 5)

Level 3 (or Tier 3) – Local COVID alert level: very high

In order to drive down transmission of the virus, the government will seek to agree additional interventions in consultation with local authorities.

These could include closing personal care and close contact services, including herbal medicine, or prohibiting the highest-risk activities ^(1, 2, 6)

It is therefore essential to check with your local authority for any local restrictions which relate to the provision of close contact services if you are subject to level 3 COVID restrictions

Other local or national restrictions may also apply ^(2, 3, 6)

Herbal practitioners in England may enter the postcode of their practice into this link to find out which COVID alert level applies to their area:

<https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions>

'Circuit-breaks' or 'Firebreaks' - periods of intermittent full lockdown

Close contact services, including herbal medicine practitioners, will almost certainly be required to close and to cease all face-to-face consultations until the period of lockdown is over.

Circuit-breaks may be imposed nationally or locally.
Other local or national restrictions may also apply ^(2, 3, 6)

Advice for herbal practitioners in Wales

The Welsh government have instituted a 2 week 'firebreak' lockdown from **23rd October 2020**. This will include closure of many non-essential services including close-contact services. Additional guidance on local restrictions is anticipated ^(7, 8)

Further Periods of intermittent full lockdown ('firebreaks') may also be introduced nationally or locally and may stipulate closure of close contact services including face-to-face consultations by herbal practitioners.

Advice for herbal practitioners in Scotland

National guidelines currently permit the provision of close contact services, including herbal medicine. Further guidance on local restrictions is anticipated ⁽⁹⁾, and a more extensive national or localised five tier system of alert levels will be introduced from **2nd November 2020**. Periods of intermittent full lockdown ('circuit-breaks') may also be introduced nationally or locally and may stipulate closure of close contact services including face-to-face consultations by herbal practitioners.

Advice for herbal practitioners in Northern Ireland

Provision of close contact services involving some forms of complementary therapy may no longer be permitted from **Friday 16th October**, apart from those relating to the continuation of essential health interventions and therapeutics ⁽¹⁰⁾. Further guidance on this and any local restrictions is anticipated shortly ⁽¹¹⁾

Periods of intermittent full lockdown ('circuit breaks') may also be introduced nationally or locally and may stipulate closure of close contact services including face-to-face consultations by herbal practitioners.

Once the situation is clearer we will issue further information.

Council for the National Institute of Medical Herbalists

Here are some resources to help you to learn more about this.

1 - Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) – Close contact services

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/close-contact-services>

2 - Local COVID alert levels: what you need to know

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-covid-alert-levels-what-you-need-to-know>

3 - Find out the Coronavirus restrictions in a local area by postcode (England)

<https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions>

4 - Guidance for those subject to COVID alert **level 1** – medium

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-covid-alert-level-medium>

5 - Guidance for those subject to COVID alert **level 2** – high

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-covid-alert-level-high>

6 - Guidance for those subject to COVID alert **level 3** – very high

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-covid-alert-level-very-high>

7 - Guidance on COVID-19 safety at work in Wales

<https://gov.wales/keep-wales-safe-work>

8 - Guidance on local lockdown by area in Wales

<https://gov.wales/local-lockdown>

9 - Guidance on COVID-19 local measures in Scotland

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-measures/>

10 - Update on time limited restrictions in Northern Ireland

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/news/executive-tightens-restrictions-curb-covid-19>

11 - Guidance on COVID-19 safety at work in Northern Ireland

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/keeping-workers-and-clients-safe-during-covid-19-close-contact-services>