

Reflexology STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

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Scope of Practice

Reflexology is based on the premise that there are zones and reflex areas that correspond to all glands, organs, parts, and systems of the body. The zones or reflex areas include, but are not limited to, the ears, face, feet, hands, and lower leg. The physical act of applying specific pressure using thumb, finger, and hand techniques; hot stones; or smooth reflexology sticks to these reflex areas can result in the reduction of stress, which promotes physiological changes in the body. Reflexologists may also teach, manage, and conduct research in the science, techniques, and practice of reflexology.

Reflexologists do not diagnose, prescribe, or treat specific conditions.

What Are Standards of Practice

The Standards of Practice for a profession describe the specific competencies required in order to achieve the expected outcomes described within the profession's scope of practice. The purpose of the Standards of Practice is to ensure that all competencies for safe, competent, and appropriate practice are identified, ensuring that the public will receive the highest degree of professionalism, safety, and best practices when accessing the profession's services.

The Natural Health Practitioners of Canada (NHPC) has endorsed and developed the Standards of Practice for Reflexology by adopting information and standards from the *NHPC Modality Standards for Reflexology* and the *UK Skills for Health Competency Standards for Reflexology* documents. The NHPC has also taken into consideration the reflexology standards of other organizations, such as the Atlantic Canada Association of Reflexology Therapists (ACART), Reflexology Association of Canada (RAC), and Reflexology Registration Council of Ontario (RRCO).

The Standards of Practice document will evolve as changes in the profession and practice occur.

The Standards of Practice is intended to be generic and was developed to describe the various tasks a reflexologist is required to perform within the scope of practice. How to perform each task is determined by the curriculum competencies developed by reflexology educational programs.

Why Have Standards of Practice

The Standards of Practice was developed as a means to determine whether a practitioner can practice reflexology at an acceptable level of competency. It serves as a reference tool for:



- reflexologists to better understand their job requirements
- educators to use as objectives in curriculum design
- membership eligibility with the NHPC
- complaints investigation
- discipline hearings
- fitness to practice
- quality assurance
- client relations
- the public to identify and evaluate the adequacy of reflexology services

Confidentiality

Reflexologists are advised that giving information about a client to any person is considered to be professional misconduct, except as required or allowed by law or to facilitate condition assessment with the client's permission.

Accountability for Standards

The NHPC has members in every province and territory in Canada. NHPC members must comply with any requirement as defined in any existing privacy legislation in their respective province or territory, as well as with any NHPC bylaw or policy related to the performance of the reflexologist.

The legislation in the reflexologist's jurisdiction will determine how they need to deal with maintaining a client's personal and health information. Reflexologists must be aware of the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (PIPEDA) federally and their respective provincial/territorial privacy legislations.

The reflexologist is only held accountable to meet a standard if he or she is the person who has performed the task.

Glossary of Concepts and Definitions

A standard of practice consists of three interrelated sub-components:

Conditions: Conditions describe the situation in which the task must be accomplished. This may include any resources, tools, materials, etc. that are given or available.

Task: A task is a description of what a practitioner is expected to accomplish.

Standard: A standard is a description of a minimum level of performance the practitioner is required to demonstrate in the performance of a task.

A standard is stated in observable and measurable terms. It must be precise and clear to the reflexologist who is held accountable for accomplishing it. It must also be clear to the clients and the public, who assess the reflexologist's ability to accomplish a task as measured by the required standard.

Standards include one or more of the following measures:

- technical quality
- interpersonal quality
- safety
- timeliness

Safety: Safety describes the situation in which danger, risk, or injury are mitigated or lessened for the client.

Reflexology Self-Care: Reflexology self-care includes personalized self-help reflex exercises that can be performed at home between sessions, which may be recommended by the reflexologist to maintain the client's existing relaxation and good health. Examples of self-care are walking barefoot, use of a foot or hand roller, and rolling the foot on a ball to access reflex points on the body.

Substitute Decision Maker: A substitute decision maker is an individual who will make health and well-being decisions on behalf of someone who is not capable of doing so.

Allopathic Medicine: Allopathic medicine is science-based, modern medicine.

Therapy Impression: A therapy impression is to formulate a session goal and conduct (if required) a differential assessment and/or reassessment to achieve the session goal.



Communication/Public Health Standards

Standard 1	Prepare the Session Area	7
Standard 2	Inform the Client of the Fees and Obtain Agreement to a Fee Schedule	8
Standard 3	Wash Your Hands and Any Skin Surface That Will/Has Come in Contact with the Client	9
Standard 4	Interview the Client to Obtain Session Expectations	10
Standard 5	Risk Identification and Management for an Outbreak of Infectious Diseases	11
Standard 6	Obtain, Update, and Record the Client's Health History	13
Standard 7	Consent	16
Standard 8	Determine the Client's Session Expectations by Conducting Assessment/Re-Assessment	18
Standard 9	Determine if Reflexology Therapy is Indicated	20
Standard 10	Session and Session Plans	21
Standard 11	Pre/Post Session Protocol	24
Standard 12	Recommend Self-Care	26
Standard 13	Client Health Record	27
Standard 14	Use of Personal Protective Equipment during a Session	29
Standard 15	Discharge of a Client	31



Foundational Knowledge/Performance Standards

Standard 1	Foundational Knowledge and Understanding of Reflexology	32
Standard 2	Knowledge of Anatomy and Physiology of Human Body Systems	34
Standard 3	Knowledge of Reflexes and Human Body Systems Relationship	35
Standard 4	Determining Use of Reflexology for Therapy	36
Standard 5	Client Evaluation for Session(s)	37



Communication/Public Health Standards

STANDARD 1

Prepare the Session Area

Conditions

In a session area, using cleaning and disinfecting materials, equipment, freshly laundered linen, towels and/or a blanket

Task

Prepare the session area

Standard

Quality/Technical

- Ensure that the room and equipment surfaces have been cleaned according to the requirements of communicable disease control as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO).
- So that you use only sheets and towels that have been freshly laundered.
- So that the linens, towels, and/or blanket that come in contact with the client have not been used by a prior client.
- So that you provide a blanket for warmth or modesty to the client, if needed.

Safety

- So that the linens and pillows do not interfere with the client's ability to get in and out of the chair or on and off the table.
- So that any obstacle or substance that could make the floor slippery is removed from the session room to prevent accidental falls.
- So that equipment is properly maintained and that manufacturer's instructions are followed correctly.
- So that infectious disease is not spread.

Timing

- Prior to the client entering the session area.
- After the client leaves the session area.



STANDARD 2

Inform the Client of the Fees and Obtain Agreement to a Fee Schedule

Conditions

Given a client who has come to you for reflexology

Task

Inform the client of the fees and obtain their agreement to a fee schedule

Standard

Quality/Technical

- So that you post your fee schedule in a location where clients may see it or provide a copy to the client.
- So that you explain the rates for a reflexology appointment to the client including what part of the session time will be used for taking a health history and assessment/reassessment.
- So that you explain to the client your policy with regard to cancellation of appointments.
- So that you provide the client with an opportunity to ask questions about the rate and fee schedule.
- So that you obtain agreement from the client for any charges that deviate from the set schedule and document them in the clinical notes with the reasons for deviation and agreement indicated.

Timing

• When the client arrives to the first appointment or prior to arrival.



STANDARD 3

Wash Your Hands and Any Skin Surface That Will/Has Come in Contact with the Client

Conditions

Given that the session area and the client are ready for therapy

Task

Wash your hands and any skin surface that will/has come in contact with the client

Standard

Quality/Technical

• Ensure that you use soap and water or at least a 60% alcohol based hand sanitizer to clean all skin surfaces by washing for a minimum of 20 seconds.

Timing

• Immediately before and immediately after each client session.



STANDARD 4

Interview the Client to Obtain Session Expectations

Conditions

In a session area, given a client who comes to you for reflexology

Task

Interview the client to obtain their session expectations

Standard

Quality/Technical

- So that your interview questions include:
 - ▲ client's expectations for the session
 - ▲ limitations to daily activities
 - ▲ discovery of contributing factors

Quality/Interpersonal

- So that you give the client an opportunity to relay any information they choose about their session expectations.
- So that you give the client an opportunity to ask questions.

Timing

• Before the session begins and at any time during the session.



STANDARD 5

Risk Identification and Management for an Outbreak of Infectious Diseases

Conditions

Given an infectious disease has been identified as a public health risk by the Chief Medical Officer of Health in the community

Task

Interview the client to determine their risk of exposure to the infectious diseases

Standard

Quality/Technical

- So that you are aware of the symptoms of the infectious disease.
- So that you use a screening tool to identify clients who are at risk of carrying or at risk from exposure if such a tool is available.
- So that you use protective barriers if the status of the client is unknown.
- So that you clean the clinic area with approved disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number from *Health Canada*.
- So that you follow any directives issued by the provincial/territorial governments or local public health unit.

Quality/Interpersonal

- So that the client is informed of the reason for screening and precautions.
- So that you provide the client with an opportunity to ask questions.

Safety

- So that clients who are at risk of carrying or at risk from exposure are not worked on, unless all surface areas of the clinic area are appropriately disinfected directly after the session to reduce spread of disease.
- So that a client is not discriminated against if they are from an identified at risk population.

Timing

• Prior to the client entering the session space, if possible.



• Prior to providing therapy.



STANDARD 6

Obtain, Update, and Record the Client's Health History

Conditions

In a session area, given a client who comes to you for reflexology

Task

Obtain/update and record the client's health history

Standard

Quality/Technical

Health history information must be requested from the client to identify indications and/or contraindications to therapy. Information requested must include, at the minimum:

- personal information
 - ▲ date on which health history was taken or updated
 - client name, address, date of birth, telephone number, occupation, and source of referral
- health and well-being information
 - ▲ expectations of the reflexology session
 - current involvement in treatment with other health care practitioner(s)
 - ▲ current medication(s) and condition(s) being treated
 - ▲ timing and nature of injuries or accidents
 - ▲ timing and nature of surgical procedures
 - ▲ history of reflexology sessions
- stress indicators and concerns, including but not limited to the following:
 - physical stress
 - headaches/aches and pains
 - high/low blood pressure
 - substance excesses, including caffeine and nicotine
 - ▲ mental/emotional stress
 - anxiety/moodiness
 - memory/concentration concerns
 - ▲ behavioural stress
 - eating patterns



- sleeping patterns
- contraindications and cautions, including but not limited to the following:
 - ▲ chemotherapy
 - ▲ deep vein thrombosis
 - ▲ eczema/psoriasis
 - ▲ epilepsy
 - ▲ heart disease
 - ▲ heavily medicated
 - ▲ infectious skin conditions
 - ▲ phlebitis/varicose veins
 - ▲ pregnancy
 - recent tattoos
- location and nature of areas of discomfort, including but not limited to the following:
 - ▲ cardiovascular imbalances
 - high blood pressure
 - ▲ digestive imbalances
 - allergies or hypersensitivity reactions
 - diabetes
 - ▲ hormonal imbalances
 - ▲ integumentary concerns
 - ▲ lymphatic and immune imbalances
 - HIV
 - mental illness
 - ▲ muscular concerns
 - nerve imbalances
 - ▲ reproductive imbalances
 - endometriosis
 - infertility
 - placenta previa
 - polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)
 - respiratory imbalances
 - allergies or hypersensitivity reactions
 - asthma
 - chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
 - ▲ sensory imbalances
 - vision or hearing loss/loss of sensation
 - skeletal and joint imbalances
 - arthritis
 - urinary imbalances



Quality/Interpersonal

- So that any contraindications are recognized and precautions or adjustments to therapy are followed.
- So that you inform the client of the need to inform you of any change in their health status.
- So that you inform the client of the reason why an accurate health history is needed before session begins.
- So that you provide the client with an opportunity to ask questions so that they better understand the health history questions being asked.
- So that you inform the client that all client information is confidential within the limits identified in the Confidentiality Statement in the Introduction and written authorization will be obtained prior to release of information.
- So that you inform the client of rights of access to the health record, in accordance with provincial/territorial or federal privacy legislation.
- So that any infectious diseases are recognized and routine (universal) and additional infection control precautions are taken.

Timing

- Before initial session begins.
- After a client absence of one year from the last session.
- Every year, at a minimum.

Safety

• So that any contraindications for reflexology or reflexology technique(s) are recognized.



STANDARD 7

Consent

Conditions

Given that the assessment/reassessment or session is ready to begin

Task

Obtain the client's consent to perform the assessment/reassessment or therapy

Standard

Quality/Technical

- So that the session is consistent with the Reflexology Scope of Practice and NHPC policies.
- So that consent is obtained voluntarily.
- So that consent is not obtained through misrepresentation or fraud.

Quality/Interpersonal

- So that you tell the client the nature and purpose of the proposed assessment/reassessment and/or therapy including the areas of the body involved.
- So that you inform the client of any risks, benefits, possible complications, and any contraindications of the assessment/reassessment and/or therapy.
- So that you inform the client that you will stop or modify assessment/reassessment or therapy at any time, at their request.
- So that you tell the client that you will be checking periodically to determine the client's level of comfort.
- So that you give the client an opportunity to ask any questions.
- In the event of a finding of incapacity or the need for a substitute decision maker, refer to the current provincial/territorial legislation and NHPC policies.
- So that the client acknowledges the request for their health history, which will include a disclaimer that they sign and date. The disclaimer must include but is not limited to the following points:
 - Reflexology is a complementary therapy and is not a substitute for medical treatment.
 - ▲ Health information is not used to diagnose or treat any condition.



- ▲ Heath information requested is used to establish an effective session plan.
- ▲ Disclosure of health information is optional.
- ▲ Health information is confidential and stored for use by the practitioner.

Timing

- Before beginning the assessment/reassessment and/or therapy.
- So that you record informed consent in the client's clinical record as soon as possible, within 24 hours of the session.
- After the client gives initial written consent in the first session, they can give consent for subsequent sessions verbally.



STANDARD 8

Determine the Client's Session Expectations by Conducting Assessment/Re-Assessment

Conditions

Given information about a client's session expectations, health history, the client's consent, conducting an assessment and/or that on-going session is taking place and a scheduled reassessment is due

Task

Determine the client's session expectations by using health history and observation to formulate a therapy impression and conduct (if required) a differential assessment and/or re-assessment to confirm the therapy impression

Standard

Quality/Interpersonal

- So that you follow the Communication/Public Health Standards 11 on pre- and post-treatment protocol, during or following conducting the assessment/re-assessment.
- So that you provide an opportunity for the client to ask questions to better understand the nature and function of the assessment or re-assessment.

Quality/Technical Safety

- So that you identify imbalances that benefit from reflexology therapy.
- So that you refer the client to other health care professionals for conditions that you cannot assess or if the need for referral is indicated in the assessment/re-assessment.
- So that the assessed observations include but are not limited to:
 - ▲ evidence of tenderness
 - ▲ temperature
 - ▲ tone and texture
 - ▲ creases and calluses
 - ▲ colour insufficiencies
 - reflex discomfort/tenderness
 - ▲ observed biomechanical insufficiencies



- So that you identify any conditions that may preclude general or local reflexology therapy or require therapy adaptation.
- So that the assessment must include the identification of potential risks associated with reflexology therapy in the presence of a contraindication
- So that the effectiveness or completion of the therapy plan can be determined, based on the original session and client expectations.
- So that a decision can be made to continue, modify/change, or stop the session plan.
- So that the results of the assessment/re-assessment are recorded in the client's health record as soon as possible, within 24 hours of assessment/re-assessment.



STANDARD 9

Determine if Reflexology Therapy is Indicated

Conditions

Given the client's completed health history and your assessment of the client's condition

Task

Determine if reflexology therapy is indicated

Standard

Quality/Technical

- So that if there is a contraindication to reflexology, you refer the client to another qualified health care professional or that you modify the session so that the client is not put at risk.
- So that if there is a local area of contraindication, modify the reflexology or work another reflex area.
- So that any referral that is made is documented in the client's health record.



STANDARD 10

Session and Session Plans

Explain the Initial Session to the Client

Conditions

Given that reflexology therapy is indicated

Task

Explain the initial session to the client

Standard

Quality/Technical

- So that the session is consistent with the reflexology Scope of Practice and NHPC policies.
- So that you obtain and adhere to any changes in the client's consent before each session.

Quality/Interpersonal

• So that you give the client an opportunity to ask any questions.

Timing

• Before beginning the session.

Develop and Record an On-Going Session Plan

Conditions

Given that on-going reflexology therapy is indicated, and given the client's request for therapy and your assessment of the client's condition

Task

Develop and record an on-going session plan



Standard

Quality/Technical

- The plan must include:
 - ▲ expectation(s) and focus of session(s)
 - ▲ areas of the body to be worked
 - ▲ anticipated frequency and duration of sessions
 - ▲ anticipated client responses to session
 - ▲ schedule for re-assessment of the client's condition, and/or recommended self-care
- So that the plan is consistent with the reflexology scope of practice and NHPC policies.

Timing

• After the first reflexology session and update whenever session plan is adjusted.

Inform the Client of Any Change in the Session Plan

Conditions

Given that the client informed you of changes in their wishes, their physical condition, or health status and/or you identified a change in the client's condition and/or a lack of client response to therapy, requiring a change in the session plan

Task

Inform the client of change in session plan

Standard

Quality/Interpersonal

- So that you ask the client if they have any questions.
- So that you answer the client's questions and/or refer them to another health care professional for questions that are not within your area of expertise.

Quality/Technical

- So that the information you convey to the client includes what the changes to the session plan are and why.
- So that you obtain and record consent from the client for all changes in session.



Timing

- Before continuing with session.
- Record changes to session plan within 24 hours of the session.



STANDARD 11

Pre/Post Session Protocol

Instruct the Client

Conditions

Given a client who has given consent to proceed with the session

Task

Instruct client on session positioning

Standard

Quality/Technical

- So that you instruct the client how they should position their body in and out of the chair or on/off the table, for the session.
- If the client requires assistance in and out of the chair or on/off the table:
 - ▲ so that you modify the assistance approach so as to minimize the client's physical discomfort

Quality/Interpersonal

• So that you provide the client with an opportunity to ask questions.

Safety

- So that the instructions include any precautions the client should take to prevent falling out of the chair or off the table.
- So that you prevent the client from falling.

Conditions

Given that the reflexology session has been completed

Task

Instruct client on when and how to get out of the chair, or, off the table



Standard

Quality/Technical and Safety

- So that you instruct the client what to do and why.
- So that you ask the client if they need assistance.
- So that you tell the client that getting out of the chair or off the table too quickly may cause dizziness and light-headedness.

Select Medium to be Used, if Needed

Conditions

Given a client positioned for the session, the client's health history pertaining to allergies, and the client's preference

Task

Select medium (cream, lotion, oil or powder) to be used, if needed

Standard

Quality/Technical and Safety

- So that the medium selected is not contraindicated for use due to an allergy or the client's preference.
- So that you ensure contaminant-free dispensing of the medium.



STANDARD 12 Recommend Self-Care

Conditions

Given that the reflexology session has been completed, if applicable, and that selfcare is indicated

Task

Recommend self-care

Standard

Quality/Technical

- So that you explain to the client appropriate self-care including its intended effect and possible negative reactions.
- So that the client is informed that if the self-care causes any negative reactions, they must discontinue its use.
- So that you demonstrate the self-care technique(s).
- So that you witness that the client understands the self-care.

Safety

• So that the self-care does not put the client at risk.

Timing

• Before the client departs.



STANDARD 13

Client Health Record

Establish and Update Clinical Records for Each Client

Conditions

Given that a client comes for a reflexology session

Task

Establish and update clinical records for the client

Standard

Quality/Technical

- Records must include:
 - ▲ the completed client health history information
 - ▲ record of client's consent to therapy
 - ▲ records of on-going sessions
- So that any copies of reports pertaining to the client received from other health care professionals are included in the record.
- So that records are confidential and are inaccessible to unauthorized individuals in accordance to provincial and territorial privacy legislation.
- So that records are kept for a minimum of 10 years from the client's last visit.
- So that if the client was under 18 years old at the time of their last visit, the records are kept for 10 years after the day they turn (or would have turned) 18 (i.e. to age 28).

Record the Session Provided to the Client

Conditions

Given that a reflexology session is complete

Task

Record the session provided to the client



Standard

Quality/Technical

- So that your records include:
 - ▲ date, time and duration of the session
 - ▲ fee for the session
 - ▲ results from assessment techniques used by the practitioner
 - ▲ reflexes and areas worked
 - ▲ client reactions/feedback to the session
 - written and verbal informed consent from the client/substitute decision maker
 - ▲ recommended self-care
 - ▲ updated health history and session information as obtained

Timing

• As soon as possible, within 24 hours of session.



STANDARD 14

Use of Personal Protective Equipment during a Session

Conditions

- Given a client or a practitioner with a recognizable contagious condition that might be spread by contact or inhalation during the reflexology session.
- Given a client or practitioner with broken skin or open or healing lesions that would be vulnerable in the course of providing a reflexology session.

Task

Perform the reflexology session:

- without spreading infection
- while using personal protective equipment

Standard

Quality/Interpersonal

- So that you explain why the use of gloves, masks or suitable alternative, or other barrier is necessary or recommended.
- So that the client is given an opportunity to ask questions.

Quality/Technical

- So that all requirements of communicable disease control as defined by *Health Canada* and/or provincial/territorial health authorities are met.
- So that the affected area on the client is avoided.
- So that the affected area of the practitioner's arm, hand, and/or fingers is totally covered to prevent contact.
- So that, in the case of an airborne infectious disease, both the practitioner and the client wear a mask before, during, and after session.

Safety

- So that if these options are not possible or available that the session be altered, terminated, or postponed.
- So that the risk of allergies has been discussed and identified.



Timing

• Before the session begins or as soon as the situation arises during session.



STANDARD 15

Discharge of a Client

Conditions

If the goals of the session plan have been met or cannot be met and/or if the needs of the client are beyond the skill, abilities, or scope of practice of the reflexologist and/or if the client is abusive

Task

Discharge the client

Standard

Quality/Interpersonal

- So that you explain to the client the reason for the discharge.
- So that the discharge explanation is given in verbal or written form and is initiated before or after the final session, but not during the session.
- So that the client is given an opportunity to ask questions.

Quality/Technical

- So that a referral is arranged prior to discharge if necessary or appropriate.
- So that the client files are transferred or stored according to the client's wishes.

Timing:

• So that sufficient notice is given to the client.



STANDARD 1

Foundational Knowledge and Understanding of Reflexology

This section sets out the foundational knowledge and understanding that is expected of reflexologists. Schools of reflexology are required to ensure their graduates possess this foundational knowledge by including it in their curriculum. Recognized reflexology programs are free to deliver this content in whatever manner best suits the design of their program.

Each standard lists performance objectives. Some also list content guidelines.

Performance Objectives

- Describe the history and development of reflexology and its relationship to other complementary therapies and to allopathic medicine.
- Describe the principles and theory of reflexology.
- Describe the structure and function of the body that includes but is not limited to the hand and the foot.
- Describe the common pathologies and conditions, causes, and related reflex areas on the body that include but are not limited to the hand and foot.
- Describe the knowledge and understanding of the reflexology chart.
- Define the reflexology methods and techniques.
- Describe equipment safety, maintenance, hygiene, and infection prevention and control precautions.
- Describe and implement record keeping strategies.
- Explain the role of a Code of Ethics.
- Demonstrate the ability to work effectively toward the resolution of ethical issues.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the concepts and scope of application of confidentiality and informed consent.
- Identify and demonstrate understanding of the client-therapist relationship.

Content

- NHPC Code of Ethics and Reflexology Standards of Practice.
- Expectations of professional behaviour in relation to the reflexologist-client relationship.
- Roles of personal and professional values in ethical decision making.
- Resolution of value conflicts.



- Concepts about personal and professional boundaries and setting.
- Understanding common business practices when applied to practising reflexology.
- Understanding how to evaluate research studies in relation to reflexology.



STANDARD 2

Knowledge of Anatomy and Physiology of Human Body Systems

Performance Objectives

Describe the basic knowledge and understanding of the structure, function, and interaction of the following body systems:

Content

- Circulatory system
- Digestive system
- Endocrine system
- Integumentary system
- Lymphatic and immune systems
- Muscular system
- Nervous and sensory systems
- Reproductive system
- Respiratory system
- Skeletal system
- Urinary system



STANDARD 3

Knowledge of Reflexes and Human Body Systems Relationship

Performance Objectives

Describe the relationship between the reflex areas and the anatomical structures, physiological systems, and emotional functioning of the human body in order to:

- know the balancing effects of the therapy
- recognize when reflexes should be worked or may require additional attention
- recognize that imbalances can affect sensations in the reflexes
- be able to formulate and adjust reflexology session plans
- recognize reflex imbalances within the reflexology scope of practice in order to develop session plans and/or offer reflexology sessions



STANDARD 4

Determining Use of Reflexology for Therapy

Performance Objectives

- Describe the purpose and application of different therapy and relaxation techniques in reflexology.
- Describe the situations in which:
 - ▲ reflexology is appropriate
 - ▲ reflexology is contraindicated
 - ▲ referral is appropriate, including where the practitioner does not have the requisite experience or expertise



STANDARD 5

Client Evaluation for Session(s)

Performance Objectives

- Describe how to correctly locate all reflex points/areas.
- Describe the use of palpation and observation to evaluate the following:
 - ▲ any muscle tension
 - ▲ foot and/or hand biomechanics with regard to range of movement and flexibility
 - ▲ foot and/or hand deformity and injury
 - ▲ foot and/or hand infectious condition
 - ▲ responses in all reflex areas
 - ▲ skin and nail colour and texture
 - skin condition, hydration, and elasticity
 - ▲ skin odour
 - ▲ skin temperature

