

# COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT



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## INTRODUCTION

Float in the Forest is a floatation centre in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire.

Floatation (or 'floating') is a type of relaxation therapy. You float on the surface of warm water saturated with Epsom salt, in a comfortable environment where sound and light are minimised.

Floatation has a wide range of benefits, both physical and psychological. Some people float because it gives them relief from chronic pain. Sportspeople use floating to help with rehabilitation and as an aid to their training. Others use it to help improve their sleep or to calm the mind. Many people find it helps reduce anxiety and stress.

Floatation activates the parasympathetic response. Muscle tensions reduce. The heart rate and breathing slow. Levels of cortisol and adrenalin drop off. Circulation improves throughout the body. Blood pressure decreases.

Floatation has been around since the 1950s. Many research papers on the beneficial effects of floatation have been published in the peer-reviewed journals over the decades. There are some exciting studies under way today at the Laureate Institute for Brain Research (LIBR). You can find out more about the benefits of floatation and the science behind them on our website.

Float in the Forest is operated to the standards provided by the Float Tank Association (FTA) of which we are a member. The FTA is advised by experts in microbiology and public health, and has made a number of COVID-19 specific recommendations.

We have 'I-sopod' brand float pods which are maintained and operated in accordance with manufacturer recommendations.

Public health is our top priority, and we take the safety of our customers very seriously. This document aims to make a reasonable and considered assessment of the risks around providing floatation at Float in the Forest, specifically associated with coronavirus (COVID-19), and the measures we have put in place to mitigate those risks. We believe that the measures we have taken as described below reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus to levels lower than that of activities which have already been given UK Government permission to take place.

More detail of policies, procedures and other documents can be provided upon request if required.

## SUMMARY OF FLOATATION AT FLOAT IN THE FOREST

Floatation is a relaxation therapy where a single customer floats alone on the surface of a warm Epsom salt solution, contained in a private float pod with integral sanitation system. The solution is maintained at 35 degrees Celsius, and comprises 1000 litres of water with 550 kg of Magnesium Sulphate dissolved in it. This makes the density of the solution approximately 1.3 times that of water, creating a buoyancy effect which is central to the experience, and also makes the environment inhospitable to microorganisms.

The solution passes through a sanitation system four times between each customer. The sanitation system consists of a one micron filter and a photo-catalytic oxidation process. This uses a combination of high intensity Ultra Violet light and Hydrogen Peroxide to generate Hydroxyl radicals, which have an oxidation potential more

than twice that of Chlorine, but without many of the disadvantages of Chlorine. Please find enclosed further details on this system from the pod manufacturer.

The individual floats face-up on the surface of the solution, with the ventral portion above the water line, so the solution does not contact the face, nose, eyes or mouth.

Each float pod is located in a separate float room, with a private shower facility in the room. Each customer has their own private room. Customers shower before and after floating.

The float rooms are purpose-built for ease and effectiveness of cleaning, with hygienic PVC wall linings, seam-welded safety flooring and integral drainage, similar to those found in a clinical setting such as an operating theatre. The float room design incorporates high flow-rate ventilation with intake and extract connected to outside the building. The room and pod are cleaned between each customer.

The float centre is 180 square metres in size. Float in the Forest has two float rooms. Floats are typically of one hour duration, are at two hour intervals, and are by appointment only, with two customers on the premises at any time.

Customers agree to terms and conditions when booking, including making a number of declarations about their health status. They receive detailed instructions and guidance prior to floating, in both written and spoken form, and are given opportunity to ask any questions.

## **FLOATATION IS DIFFERENT**

Floatation differs significantly from other activities such those which take place at spas or swimming pools. This is reflected in our Sui Generis planning use of 'Floatation Centre' (planning reference number P0253/18/FUL).

Key facts which reduce the risk when compared to other activities include:

- customers float alone in isolation from other customers and staff
- the float room and pod are cleaned between each customer
- the float solution is sanitised between each customer
- the customer's face remains above the surface of the solution
- customers shower before and after floating
- the communal space is large, with only a small number of people present at any one time
- customer access to the premises is controlled by appointment, and is conditional on providing personal details and a health screening

## RISKS AND MITIGATION

Here are the risks and specific mitigating measures we have taken. Many of the mitigating measures are activities that we were already performing prior to this temporary closure. Some have been added in light of guidance on best practice with regard to coronavirus from the Float Tank Association, the I-sopod manufacturer, the UK government and other sources.

### **RISK: TRANSMISSION THROUGH CLOSE PERSON-TO-PERSON PROXIMITY**

This risk will be mitigated by:

- a) minimising time spent in close proximity
- b) maximising distance between people

These will be achieved by the following specific measures:

- 1) We have a maximum of 4 people (consisting of 2 customers and 2 staff) on the 180 square metre premises at any one time. The size and layout of the centre, the nature of the service, and the customer flow through the premises make it straightforward to maintain the current government mandated social distancing.
- 2) People do not spend much time in the same room together at any point during the customer's visit because the majority of the time they are on the premises is spent in their own private room.
- 3) Customers are admitted by appointment only. Appointments are spaced with significant intervals in between. This minimises the number of people on the premises at any one time, allowing maximum opportunity for social distancing.
- 4) Payment is taken online at the point of booking, which minimises the time required in interaction with staff upon arrival and leaving.
- 5) Customers have to sign to agree to specific behaviours prior to their appointment, this will include maintaining the recommended social distance from others when at the float centre.
- 6) Instructions will be provided in advance by video instead of in person in the float room (so a staff member does not need to enter the float room with the customer, and time spent with the customer is minimised). Customers are sent reminder emails in advance of their appointment which will tell them to watch the video.
- 7) We will require customers to complete the intake agreement form in advance online, instead of in person on a handheld tablet on the premises. This will minimise time spent with the customer. Customers are sent reminder emails in advance of their appointment which will tell them to complete the intake agreement form.

- 8) Customers will be asked to arrive promptly and wait outside until they are invited into the premises. These measures will help ensure we can maintain the appropriate social distancing. Customers are sent emails in advance of their appointment which will remind them of these points.
- 9) Only customers will be allowed into the premises (if they are accompanied their companion must wait outside, unless they need their companion to assist them in moving around the float centre safely).
- 10) We will reiterate COVID-19 specific behaviour expectations upon arrival.
- 11) We will increase the distance between seating in reception to ensure social distancing if two customers from separate households are seated in reception concurrently.
- 12) We will provide signage in suitable locations to encourage risk mitigating behaviour among our customers and staff. These will remind people to:
  - Wait outside until invited into the premises
  - Maintain the recommended social distance from others throughout their visit
- 13) Customers are also sent reminder emails in advance of their appointment which will encourage risk-mitigating behaviours.
- 14) Customers will be instructed to take turns in the mirror room (unless they are from the same household) to ensure social distancing.
- 15) Customers will be instructed to take turns to leave through reception (unless they are from the same household) to ensure social distancing.

We have considered mandating the use of face coverings for staff. However recent government guidance states that if sufficient social distancing can be maintained, the use of face coverings is not required:

"the evidence of the benefit of using a face covering to protect others is weak and the effect is likely to be small, therefore face coverings are not a replacement for the other ways of managing risk, including minimising time spent in contact, using fixed teams and partnering for close-up work, and increasing hand and surface washing. These other measures remain the best ways of managing risk" (see bibliography)

We have considered social distancing measures between staff, however these are not currently required because all staff are members of the same household. This risk assessment will be reviewed and suitable guidelines followed if and when other staff are recruited.

## **RISK: TRANSMISSION THROUGH CONTACT WITH CONTAMINATED SURFACES**

This risk will be mitigated by:

- a) minimising contact with surfaces
- b) cleaning surfaces

These will be achieved by the following specific measures:

- 1) Customers appointments are spaced with significant intervals in between. This provides sufficient time for effective cleaning between customers.
- 2) Customers will have to sign to agree to specific behaviours prior to their appointment including:
  - Using the hand sanitiser provided upon arrival in reception
  - Covering their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze
  - Avoiding touching surfaces unnecessarily
  - Washing hands
  - Considering wearing a face covering
  - If they have recently been in an environment where there is a high risk of COVID-19 such as working a 'frontline' job in the NHS or care sector, they must change their clothes and shower before coming to the float centre.
  - They must not come to float if they develop COVID-19 symptoms after booking but prior to their appointment. They must inform us by phone as soon as they develop symptoms so that we can reschedule their appointment.
- 3) Customers are also sent reminder emails in advance of their appointment which will encourage risk-mitigating behaviours.
- 4) We have made more time for cleaning between appointments by providing instructions for the customer to watch in advance on video (instead of providing instruction in person during the time the customer is on site). This reduces the time period the customer needs to be on site, providing longer periods between appointments. Customers are sent reminder emails in advance of their appointment which will tell them to watch the video.
- 5) We will require the customer to complete the intake agreement form in advance online, instead of in person on a handheld tablet on the premises. This removes a significant touchpoint. It also makes more time for cleaning between appointments. Customers are sent reminder emails in advance of their appointment which will tell them to complete the intake agreement form.
- 6) Greater time will be made available for cleaning by asking customers to arrive promptly and wait outside until they are invited into the premises. Customers are sent emails in advance of their appointment which will remind them of these points.

- 7) Hand sanitiser will be provided in reception and its use by customers will be mandatory upon arrival.
- 8) We will reiterate COVID-19 specific behaviour expectations to customers upon arrival.
- 9) We will provide signage in suitable locations to encourage risk mitigating behaviour among our customers and staff. These will remind people to:
  - Use the hand sanitiser provided upon arrival in reception
  - Cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing
  - Avoid touching surfaces unnecessarily
  - Wash their hands
- 10) Payment is taken online at the point of booking to minimise the number of customer touch points, and reduce the use of in-person cash or card payments.
- 11) Card machines are used for occasional in-person sales. We will encourage people to use contactless payment where possible and the card machine will be cleaned between each occasion it is touched.
- 12) Fresh equipment is provided for every customer (hand towel, bath sheet, petroleum jelly sachet, sealed earplugs).
- 13) A single clean drinking vessel will be put out for each customer at their appointment time. All other cups and glasses will remain in storage until they are put out, ensuring that no one else has touched them prior to use.
- 14) Teabags will be left spread out in just their sealed sachets, not the outer boxes, so that nothing needs to be handled by more than one person.
- 15) The number of items available to handle will be minimised, with books, colouring books, magazines, and float journals removed.
- 16) The float rooms have been designed and built to facilitate effective and rapid cleaning. Design measures include sealed seams, smooth surfaces, curved joints, and easily cleaned materials for walls, fixtures, and flooring (such as PVC, vinyl, stainless steel). Furniture is made of single piece injection-moulded plastic, and designed with smooth seamless curved surfaces.
- 17) The lighting in the float rooms is on an infrared sensor so that customers can enjoy the benefits of floating in reduced light without the need to touch a light switch.
- 18) Float in the Forest is operated to the standards provided by the Float Tank Association of which we are a member.
- 19) Cleaning procedures have been designed, cleaning agents selected, and cleaning equipment chosen in line with industry best practice and FTA guidance, including considerations around minimum contact times (or 'wet times') required to inactivate enveloped viruses such as the coronavirus. Cleaning equipment such as tools and cloths are colour coded by use. Cloths are washed after a single use. All cleaning procedures and

water sanitation procedures are documented in detail in writing, and a system is in place to record when each task is completed.

- 20) Surfaces in the pod are of particular note because they are relatively close to the customer and the customer spends a relatively long time in the pod. For this reason there are more likely to be oral fluid drops in the air within the pod and internal pod surfaces. To prevent future customers touching surfaces contaminated by previous customers we have introduced new measures. Between each customer all internal surfaces of the pod will be sprayed with a 0.5% Hydrogen Peroxide and left for a contact time of greater than one minute before wiping down with a clean cloth (mask, gloves and goggles are worn during this process). 0.5% Hydrogen Peroxide has a contact time for inactivating enveloped viruses of less than one minute.
- 21) The float solution is sanitised between each person by passing through a one micron filter and a photo-catalytic oxidation process. This uses a combination of high intensity Ultra Violet light and Hydrogen Peroxide to generate Hydroxyl radicals, which have an oxidation potential more than twice that of Chlorine. For more information on the sanitation system please see the manufacturer's document provided.
- 22) The float pods are maintained and operated in accordance with manufacturer recommendations, including frequency of filter changes, UV bulb replacement, and cleaning procedures. Maintenance tasks are recorded with reference to date, time and number of floats provided.
- 23) Water is tested regularly and the results are recorded, with remedial action taken when required to ensure Hydrogen Peroxide and Magnesium Sulphate concentration remain within acceptable parameters.
- 24) Between each customer touchpoints throughout the float room (including the outside of the float pod, door handles, shower controls, shelves, grab handles, and chair) are sprayed with 0.5% Hydrogen Peroxide and left for a contact time of greater than one minute before wiping down with a clean cloth.
- 25) Touchpoints throughout the rest of the centre will be cleaned between each appointment (including door handles and push plates, taps, toilet flushes, hairdryers, toiletry bottles, etc).



## **RISK: TRANSMISSION THROUGH AIRBORNE DROPLETS WITHOUT PERSON-TO-PERSON PROXIMITY**

This risk will be mitigated by:

- a) time between people being present in the same air volume (time for droplets to precipitate)
- b) cleaning surfaces

These will be achieved by the following specific measures:

- 1) Customers appointments are spaced with significant intervals in between. This provides time to allow airborne droplets to precipitate out of the air and/or be purged through ventilation.
- 2) Customers will have to sign to agree to specific behaviours prior to their appointment , including:
  - Covering their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze
  - Considering wearing a face covering
- 3) Customers are also sent reminder emails in advance of their appointment which will encourage risk-mitigating behaviours.
- 4) Tissues are provided for customers
- 5) We will reiterate COVID-19 specific behaviour expectations to customers upon arrival.
- 6) We will provide signage in suitable locations to encourage risk mitigating behaviour among our customers and staff. These will remind people to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- 7) Float in the Forest is operated to the standards provided by the Float Tank Association of which we are a member. We will allow 15 minutes to elapse after the customer has exited the pod, before we clean it. This is in order to allow airborne droplets to settle, as advised by the microbiologist on the board of the FTA. (Research suggests that in the absence of air movement oral fluid droplets precipitate in the time frame of 8-14 minutes).
- 8) Between each customer all internal surfaces of the pod will be sprayed with a 0.5% Hydrogen Peroxide and left for a contact time of greater than one minute before wiping down with a clean cloth (mask, gloves and goggles are worn during this process). 0.5% Hydrogen Peroxide has a contact time for inactivating enveloped viruses of less than one minute.
- 9) Suitable ventilation is used throughout the float centre to ensure airflow. This includes passive and active air vents in rooms, and manual purging though opening doors and windows regularly. The float room design includes a purpose built high flow-rate intake and extract ventilation system with intake and extract connected to outside the building.

## **RISK: TRANSMISSION THROUGH INFECTED PERSONS ON SITE**

This risk will be mitigated by discouraging those most likely to be infected from visiting

This will be achieved by the following specific measures:

- 1) The customer must complete a screening form declaring their health status prior to appointment, which will affirm that:
  - They will not float if they currently have COVID-19 or suspect that they may have it, or if they have had any of the following symptoms in the last 14 days, or if they have been in contact with anyone with these symptoms in the last 14 days:
    - Continuous dry cough
    - Fever / high temperature
    - Loss of, or change in normal sense of taste or smell
  - They will not come to float if they are self-isolating due to COVID-19, or suspected COVID-19.
  - They will not come to float if they have been advised to shield at home.
- 2) Customers have to sign to agree to specific behaviours prior to their appointment, which will include:
  - They will not come to float if they develop COVID-19 symptoms after booking but prior to their appointment. They will inform us by phone as soon as they develop symptoms so that we can reschedule their appointment.
  - They will inform us if they develop symptoms after they float so we can cooperate in tracing contacts if required.
- 3) Only customers will be allowed into the premises (if they are accompanied their companion must wait outside, unless they need their companion to assist them in moving around the float centre safely).