

General guidelines & safety

General rules

- Parents must accompany children less than 14 years old. No child may be left unattended before or after the therapy session. If your child is to be picked up by someone other than their regular parent/guardian, please let us know ahead of time. Children will not be released to anyone unknown to the staff
- Friends and family are encouraged to attend therapy sessions to watch and support their loved ones. They must stay within the designated area.
- It is important to follow the rules of the center and to avoid being a distracting presence for the client. Please refrain from attempts to interact with the client while mounted, unless the therapist requests it.
- Children must always be supervised. Please do not leave children unattended or allow them to run and play loudly around the facility.
- It is forbidden to:
 - run in the stable and around the riding areas
 - play on the mounting ramps and blocks and fences.
 - yell or shout
- Clients are encouraged to bring treats for the horses; however, only staff will distribute food to the horses for the sake of the horses' health, diet, manners and client safety.
- Anyone accompanying a client must wear the appropriate footwear (closed shoes).
- It is prohibited to enter the stalls or paddocks to visit the horses without authorization and supervision
- Our horses and volunteers should be treated kindly – they work hard for us all
- No photographs or videos may be taken unless a client has consent from everyone. Do not use flash when taking photos.
- Riders should not chew gum or have candy or similar in their mouths while on the horse.

Client clothing guidelines

- ASTM-approved helmets must be worn by all clients. Lightweight helmets are only used when directed by the occupational therapist
- Long pants are required to prevent pinching and rubbing. Clothing should be appropriate for the weather and needs to be non-slip in nature
- Closed-toe shoes are required in all equestrian therapy. Open-toed shoes/sandals are not acceptable, nor are shoes which light up.
- Shirts and jackets with hoods should either have their hoods removed (if they are detachable) or tucked in. Jackets must be fastened (zipped) while mounted
- No ankle, wrist, finger or neck jewelry (exception: medic alert tags)
- Earrings may be worn but should be studs or small hoops to avoid catching or being grabbed



- No client is to carry a phone when they are near or mounted on a horse.
- If prescription eyewear is required while mounted, consider use of a safety strap to prevent the glasses from becoming dislodged while riding
- For clients unable to toilet independently, ensure they mount with a clean unsoiled garment for their comfort and hygiene while riding
- Weather Conditions: It is recommended that clients wear gloves and close-fitting hats in colder weather and sunscreen in warm weather.

Safety onsite

Safety is our number one priority at Équi-Libre. We do everything possible to ensure the safety of our clients, volunteers, staff, and horses. We are dependent on volunteers to run therapy sessions safely. If there are insufficient volunteers for an occupational therapy appointment, the following will occur:

- Parents, caregivers, or friends may be asked to assist as sidewalkers
- If suitable, the class will be held in the form of an unmounted therapy
- Clients will not ride if adequate help is not available
- Refunds will not be given for unmounted therapy

Please note: As we are working with live animals, it may sometimes occur that a horse may need to be replaced at the last minute due to sudden illness, lameness or other factors which may affect the safety of the rider, the volunteers or the therapist. This change may result in delays in the mounted portion of the therapy. Due to the tight schedule of the therapy sessions, it is not guaranteed that the mounted time will be made up during the session.

Medications and altering substances

- Except for prescribed medications, clients should avoid riding while under the influence of medication, particularly if the medication is new to the client and its side effects are unknown. This includes cold and allergy medication, anti-nausea, anti-diarrhea, anti-indigestion, and motion sickness medications
- Care should be used if taking anti-inflammatory medication or analgesics, as they may mask new or further injury
- No client should mount, or remain mounted if they are intoxicated by alcohol or drugs, or experience sudden onset of dizziness or nausea, due to the increased possibility of a fall
- Clients who are taking new medications must share this information with their therapist prior to mounting so that they may supervise their ride taking this information into account, perhaps even altering the intended therapy plan if required

Seizure policy

It is the responsibility of the client or parent/guardian to inform Équi-Libre of a seizure immediately. For the physical well-being and safety of the client, horses, volunteers, and therapists, clients who have had a recent seizure will not be allowed to participate in mounted activities (riding) unless:

- They have been seizure-free for one year (unmedicated)
- They have been seizure-free for six months (medicated)

Client weight

For the physical well-being and safety of the client, horses, volunteers, and therapists, the maximum weight of any client must not exceed 180 pounds.

Weather (Temperature)

For the comfort and safety of the client, horses, volunteers, and therapists, Équi-Libre will cancel any sessions where the temperature goes above 35 degrees Celsius (with humidex). During the winter months, Équi-Libre will cancel any sessions where the temperature goes below -20 (without the windchill factor).

Équi-Libre Covid-19 protocol

We take the health of our clients, staff, and volunteers very seriously. We have created a biosecurity protocol using guidelines set forth by the Québec government, Public Health, and Cheval Québec (our provincial equestrian association). Please note that these protocols may be updated from time to time to align with guidelines from the above-mentioned agencies. Below is the protocol we are asking our clients to abide by. If you would like more information on our internal disinfection and safety protocols, please let us know.

Before arriving at the Centre:

- Please do not come to the centre if you, your child (if applicable), or any member of your household is showing the following symptoms (note that cancellations fees may apply):
 - Fever: 38.1°C (100.6°F) or higher (oral temperature)
 - Sudden loss of smell with no nasal congestion, with or without loss of taste
 - Cough (new or worsening)
 - Shortness of breath
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Sore throat
- Please do not come to the centre if you, your child (if applicable), or any member of your household is showing two or more of the following symptoms (note that cancellation fees may apply):
 - Runny nose or nasal congestion (stuffy nose) for no known reason
 - Headache

- Extreme fatigue
- Generalized muscle pain (not related to physical effort)
- Significant loss of appetite
- Nausea or vomiting
- Stomach ache
- Diarrhea

Once at the Centre:

- o Please sanitize your hands at the entrance to the stable/arena
- o Please limit the number of accompanying family members at the centre
- o If you have a cough, sore throat or nasal congestion, wear a mask.

At all times - Keep Équi-Libre informed

All clients must have complete and up-to-date documents on-site, and they must be updated annually.

Changes to medical status must be shared with a therapist immediately, preferably before arriving at the Centre. Depending on the individual situation, clients may still be accommodated with tack or lesson plan changes. However, in some cases, clients cannot safely be mounted due to the increased risk of injury. This includes but is not limited to:

- o Onset of seizures / recent seizure activity
- o Changes in medications or dosages
- o Injuries, including abrasions, pressure sores, and bruising on weight-bearing areas
- o Minor and major medical procedures, particularly where any type of anesthetic is used
- o Behavior changes, given these often reflect physiological changes taking place at an otherwise non-symptomatic level, especially for clients who are non-verbal