

Wednesday, 1 July 2020

Greenlit to reopen from today, some spas and wellness centres play for more time and info



Therapists decked in protective gear are pictured at the Healthland Wellness Centre in Sunway Pyramid June 30, 2020. — Picture by Choo Choy May

KUALA LUMPUR, July 1 — While spas, wellness and reflexology centres are allowed to resume business starting today, it would appear that not all are ready just yet.

Common reasons include a lack of manpower and detailed information on what their standard operating procedures (SOPs) should be from now in the Covid-19 era.

“For now, we will open only for facial, manicure and pedicure services.

“So no massages for now, until we get more information on SOPs, in written form, of how to conduct this service,” Mandarin Oriental Kuala Lumpur’s spa and wellness director Theresa Winkler told *Malay Mail* when contacted.

She said the hotel is also waiting for the government to detail the volume of spa guests allowed and the operation hours for its spa services.

Other luxe hotel chains approached said they had to iron out their staffing issues before offering spa services again.

“All our staff have been sent to undergo Covid-19 tests and it takes at least three days to get the results.

“Once the tests have been completed, only then we will be able to plan for reopening,” disclosed a staff at Spa Village in Ritz Carlton Kuala Lumpur who is not authorised to speak, on condition of anonymity.

Shangri-La Kuala Lumpur is looking at reopening its spa services only later in July, said a staff who also requested anonymity.

“All spa staff are on leave. We won't be reopening so soon,” said the staff without elaborating.

Putrajaya’s announcement that spas, massage, and other wellness services may resume business from July 1 has received mixed response from those running such facilities and those patronising them.

Many who were deprived of income since March 18 when the movement control order (MCO) was imposed were keen to get back to work, but their enthusiasm is tinged with anxiety on the dos-and-don'ts under the new normal.

With gloves or without?



Sanitisation will be done after each treatment at Sifu Reflexology. — Picture courtesy of Sifu Reflexology

One wellness centre that has several branches in the Klang Valley, Sifu Reflexology, will be reopening its doors today and making available all its services: from foot massages to body massages and hot stone treatments.

While all staff will be wearing facemasks, apron and headcover, customers will be given the option to have their therapist wear gloves while undergoing treatment.

“It is strange that massages have to be done with the masseurs wearing gloves because you won't be able to feel pressure on areas that are being treated.

“But it is a precaution we are taking and if a guest prefers for the masseurs to not wear gloves they can request for that,” its co-founder who wished to be known only as Teng said, assuring clients that all therapists scrub down their hands before treatment.

She said Sifu's capacity will be halved in keeping with social distancing standards, but also indicated that the government's prohibition on foreign workers contributed to a staffing shortage.

“We hope the government would allow foreign workforce to work at spas and centres like ours because some of our masseurs are trained from their country of origin and have been with us for over 10 years.

“Now they cannot go back to work and we have to make do with local workforce only,” Teng said.

Manpower shortage and its effect

As a result, two of Sifu’s branches in popular expatriate locales — Bukit Bintang and Desa Sri Hartamas — have been shut.

“The tourist situation is still uncertain now so we have decided to shut the two outlets and we’re in the midst of thinking about relocating the two outlets.

“Slow traffic in these areas have affected our business and in return we cannot cover for high rental fees,” she said.



A therapist decked in protective gear gives a demonstration of standard operating procedures that will be adhered to during a foot massage at the Healthland Wellness Centre in Sunway Pyramid June 30, 2020. — Picture by Choo Choy May

Another popular Klang Valley chain, Healthland Wellness Centre, conceded that its facilities have been severely affected by the Malaysian staff only rule.

“As 70 per cent of our therapists are of foreign workforce, we will not be operating at full capacity due to a lack of resources as most of our foreign therapists are back in their home country and waiting to be called back,” an anonymous Healthland spokesman told *Malay Mail*.

Regulars who are used to Healthland’s hospitality will have to acclimatise themselves to a barebones service in the foreseeable future.

The spokesperson said that for safety, hygiene and social distancing practices, its outlets will no longer provide drinks to spa guests before and after treatment; hot towels too will be done away with and only disposable items will be used.

He added that each outlet will accept only 10 spa guests at a time and each will get a treatment room. However, treatments will be limited to an hour per person.

To go or not to go



A therapist decked in protective gear gives a demonstration of standard operating procedures that will be adhered to during a Thai massage at the Healthland Wellness Centre in Sunway Pyramid June 30, 2020. — Picture by Choo Choy May

Several spa regulars were conflicted about whether to go for treatments again.

John Teo is among those who can’t wait for the spas to reopen. The public relations practitioner said he signed up for a spa package worth RM3,000 just before the MCO and was upset that he has not been able to get his money’s worth since.

“I haven't heard from them since. There is no news about their reopening.

“I tried calling, but there is no answer too. I hope they have not shut entirely due to the prolonged MCO period,” he told *Malay Mail*.

Aida Lee too said she would not mind going to the spa again as long as the centres can assure her of proper compliance with the Health Ministry's SOP.

“Going to the spa is not all about relaxation, but for some it helps ease tensed muscles and a tired body.

“There are safety precautions that can be taken, such as social distancing and thorough sanitisation of the centre. That should help prevent any spreading fears,” she said.

But Jayshree Ganesh who used to visit spas at least once a month before the MCO, her next visit will not be soon out of fear of a “second wave”.

“I'm also worried if masseurs are not diligent in washing hands or if the spa's facilities are sanitised regularly — it's the things that we don't see that worries me,” she said.

(Source: <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/07/01/greenlit-to-reopen-from-today-some-spas-and-wellness-centres-play-for-more/1880344>)