

Code of Safe Clinical Practice

About this code

1. The Code of Safe Clinical Practice defines standards for the safe and hygienic practice of acupuncture. Failure to comply with this Code will be deemed as a breach of the Association of Acupuncture Clinicians Code of Professional Conduct ('the Code'). This Code is designed to protect both practitioners and public. The principles outlined in this Code, when properly observed, provide protection against all known cross-infection, including blood-borne viruses. Where local authority byelaws have been enacted, which set higher standards than those in this Code, the bylaws will take precedence. Where no byelaws have been enacted, or where byelaws require standards lower than those in the Code, you must comply with the standards set by this Code.

Must

2. The term 'must' in this document is used where strict adherence is required.

Should

3. The use of the term 'should' is used to indicate best practices and the exercise of professional judgment. It acknowledges that there may be factors beyond your control where deviations from the guidance provided may be necessary.

STATEMENT OF MANDATORY PRINCIPLES

YOUR WORKPLACE

1. You must ensure that both you and any premises in which you work are properly registered or licensed for the practice of acupuncture.
2. You must have up-to-date indemnity insurance and public liability insurance that is appropriate for your practice and provides coverage for all your clinical acupuncture skills and any adjunctive and/or ancillary therapies you use.
3. You must have suitable hand washing facilities available.
4. You must keep the treatment room clean.
5. You must take appropriate steps to prevent / minimise the risk of cross-infection from treatment surfaces.
6. Whether your treatment area is a fixed clinic site or mobile, you must strictly adhere to the six actions towards aseptic technique.

YOUR EQUIPMENT

7. You must only use equipment which is CE-marked or CAUK marked and conforms to current legislation.

YOUR DUTY OF CARE

8. You must ensure the health and safety of your patients.
9. You must ensure that your own health and personal hygiene do not put patients at risk.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PERFORM ACUPUNCTURE SAFELY

10. You must establish and maintain a clean field at all times.
11. You must maintain high levels of hand hygiene.
12. You must insert and remove needles hygienically and safely.
13. You must use well-fitting single-use disposable surgical gloves for blood or body fluid spills.

YOUR SAFE DISPOSAL OF EQUIPMENT AND CLINICAL WASTE

14. You must dispose of used equipment and clinical waste legally, safely and in accordance with current legislation

YOUR COMMITMENT TO HEALTH AND SAFETY

15. You must comply with the requirements and provisions of current health and safety at work legislation, especially hazardous waste, and fire regulations.

For more information please visit <https://www.hse.gov.uk/legislation/hswa.htm>

Your Workplace

You must ensure that both you and any premises in which you work are properly registered or licensed for the practice of acupuncture.

4. If you practise outside Greater London you must be registered under the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1982 for all of the practices in which you work. Registration under this Act is required for each person and for every practice, unless a recognised and specific group practice arrangement is in place.
5. If you practise within Greater London (with the exception of the City of London for which special licensing arrangements apply) you must contact your local environmental health department to advise them of your presence and to inform them of your exemption from licensing under the London Local Authorities Act 1991.

You must have suitable hand washing and sanitary facilities.

6. You must ensure that there are hand washing facilities with supply of clean hot and cold running water located in the treatment room or in the near vicinity.
7. You must ensure the provision of antibacterial liquid soap in a suitable dispenser, disposable paper towels and an adequately sized bin. If the bin has a lid, it should be foot pedal operated and placed near the basin.

You must keep the treatment room clean

8. You must ensure that tabletops, shelves and all working surfaces, including couches and chairs, are smooth and easily cleanable.
9. Flooring must be smooth or consist of short pile (not looped) commercial carpeting.

You must take appropriate steps to prevent / minimise the risk of cross-infection from treatment surfaces

10. You must ensure the couch surface is clean for each patient by one of the following three methods:
 - a. Cleaning the couch surface before treating each new patient, utilising appropriate disinfecting spray or wipes such as Clinisept or Clinell.
 - b. Covering the couch surface with paper couch roll, ensuring they are fresh for each patient, disposed of immediately after the treatment and cleaned at the end of each day.
 - c. Covering the couch surface with towels or sheets alone, ensuring they are fresh for each patient and boiled or machine-washed on a 40-60 degrees setting before reuse.
11. You should regularly clean all surfaces with an appropriate detergent or disinfectant, and you must always do so at the beginning and end of every working day.

Your treatment area, whether a fixed clinic site or mobile, should follow the 6 actions towards aseptic technique

- a. You must carry out a risk assessment of your treatment room and patient areas.
- b. You must manage your environment – avoid or remove risks to patients.
- c. Decontaminate and protect your working area.
- d. Use Aseptic Fields to work in which may include general field and your critical or treatment field.
- e. Use aseptic non-touch technique where you only touch the skin with sterile equipment and touch only if required with sterile hands.
- f. Prevent Cross Infection by cleaning down areas and tools.

YOUR EQUIPMENT

You must only use equipment that bears the CE or CAUK-mark and conforms to current legislation

12. You must strictly adhere to the guidance related to needle usage:
 - a. Needles must be single-use, pre-sterilised, disposable and packaged in boxes marked with a lot number. The packaging should also include the recommended CE mark or CAUK mark, method of sterilisation, the term 'sterile,' and expiry date.

- b. Specialist types of needles designed for reuse must be washed and cleaned thoroughly, following the manufacturer's requirements, before being sterilised using an autoclave.
 - c. Dispose of any needles beyond their expiry date.
 - d. Dispose of unused needles from open multipacks if there is a risk of contamination once the package has been broken.
 - e. Do not store unused needles from open multipacks overnight for later use.
 - f. Do not use any needle(s) from an unopened package with a damaged seal.
13. Guide tubes must be pre-sterilised and come packaged with each individual needle or set of needles; they must not be used or stored for use after the session in which the seal on the package is broken. If using a needle injector, stainless steel re-usable guide tube or similar, you need to sterilise between treatments.

Other modalities such as gua sha and cupping that drag materials across the body should be performed before needling and never over open acupuncture holes after needling. For more detailed advice, please refer to the appendices.

Moxibustion

14. If using moxa, please refer to the Moxa Advisory appendix for detailed information for guidance.

YOUR DUTY OF CARE

You must ensure the health and safety of your patient

15. Prior to treating a new patient, you must take their medical history and ensure that acupuncture is an appropriate treatment for them.
16. If a patient has, or is suspected of having, a notifiable infectious disease or has a serious pre-existing medical condition, you should ensure that it is safe to treat them. This may require contacting the patient's GP, subject to obtaining their explicit written consent.
17. Prior to administering acupuncture treatment, you must ensure that any part of the body to be treated is clean, free from wounds and cuts, and clear of any clothing.

18. If you need to leave a patient unattended you must first:

- a. obtain their consent;
- b. advise them not to move in any way which might bend or damage a needle and cause them injury;
- c. inform them of how to call for your immediate attention at any time.

19. You must not leave a patient unattended when using moxa, cupping or any other form of treatment which may result in an injury.

20. You should be able to recognise adverse reactions to acupuncture treatment and know what action to take, including referral to another acupuncturist or other health professional if appropriate.

You must ensure that your own health and personal hygiene do not put patients at risk

21. You must cover any cuts and wounds with a waterproof dressing and wear gloves if you have any open sores from dermatitis or eczema type patches on your hands.

22. You must maintain your nails short and clean. You must not wear artificial nails or use nail polish that could compromise hand hygiene. Wearing jewellery is discouraged. Limited jewellery is permitted, but must be kept clean and any raised or intricate designs that could potentially cause injury must be avoided.

23. You should dress in a professional, appropriate and clean manner which befits the professional/medical nature of your role.

24. You must not treat patients when suffering from an infectious or contagious condition which may be transmitted to the patient.

25. You are encouraged to inform your GP as soon as possible, if you suspect that you may be suffering from, or have been in contact with someone suffering from, a notifiable infectious disease.

26. You must not treat a patient if your fitness to practise is impaired by prescribed or over-the-counter medication or other substances.

27. You should make appropriate safeguarding arrangements and/or cease practising if your judgment or performance is impaired by a physical or mental health issue that could put patients at risk.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PERFORM ACCUPUNCTURE SAFELY

You must establish and maintain a clean field at all times

28. You must designate a clean field area on a flat, smooth, cleanable surface in the treatment room.
29. All treatment equipment must be placed on the clean field, including trays/dishes, packets of needles, packets of clean cotton wool or cotton buds designed for external use on skin and clinic grade alcohol swabs or other recognised industry standard solution, such as Clinisept.
30. You must not place any container used for disposal of needles and/or contaminated waste on the clean field.

You must maintain high levels of hand hygiene

31. You must wash your hands with antibacterial soap before and after every treatment.
32. You must sanitise your hands with alcohol gel or other recognised sanitising product before inserting or removing any needles.
33. You must sanitise your hands with alcohol gel or other recognised sanitising product before touching the patient if your hands have become contaminated by handling anything which could transfer infection from patient to patient.
34. You must wash your hands after dealing with blood and body fluids regardless of whether you wear gloves.

You must insert and remove needles hygienically and safely

35. You must ensure that the skin at the needle site is clean by swabbing with 70% alcohol, Clinisept or another clinically accepted sterilisation solution. The area must be clear of any clothing and needles must not be inserted through clothing.
36. You must thoroughly clean any skin that has been previously treated with creams or oils using a 70% alcohol or other clinically accepted solution, such as Clinisept, and allow to dry before needling.
37. You should open all single-use pre-sterilised needles and instruments in the presence of the patient and immediately before use.
38. When inserting the needle, you should avoid touching the shaft unless necessary. If supporting the shaft of the needle is required, you must ensure that your hands must be sterile or use an alternative sterile material to hold the needle.
39. You must not place a needle on an intermediate surface before or after use.

40. After removing needles, place each one directly into a sharps box or medical tray, which should be promptly emptied into a sharps box.
41. If you draw blood when removing needles, you should apply light pressure using a clean cotton bud designed for external use on skin, avoiding contact with the patient's body fluids. Use caution when using cotton wool to prevent body fluids from soaking through the cotton wool to your skin. If the cotton bud becomes contaminated with blood or body fluids, dispose of it in a sharps container or clinical waste bag. Cotton buds without contamination can be placed in normal refuse.

Once you have needled a point, you must not re-palpate the point with your bare finger during that treatment session unless the fingertips have been disinfected with alcohol-based hand rub gel.

FSN Needling

42. Use a fresh FSN needle for each treatment. If re-using the same needle, ensure that all of sites to be needled have been swabbed with a disinfecting swab before needling, and the FSN needle is placed on applicator or temporarily stored in the original protective sheath and placed in a cleaned treatment tray. The needle must not be placed on any other surface in between separate insertions. You must keep the reuse of needles to a minimum and must limited it to treatments on the same patient. Ensure that the FSN needle is properly placed on an applicator, which has been thoroughly cleaned with 70% isopropyl alcohol or other clinically accepted sterilisation solution or pre-sterilised immediately before needling.

You must use well-fitting single-use disposable surgical gloves for blood or body fluid spills

43. Use of single-use surgical gloves is mandatory in the following circumstances:
 - a. The patient is bleeding profusely.
 - b. Blood or body fluid is spilled in which case you must also ensure that any spillage is cleaned up promptly using appropriate cleaning agents.
 - c. The patient has open lesions.
 - d. You have a reason to believe that the patient has a contagious disease.
 - e. You have cuts or wounds on your hands which cannot be covered adequately with a waterproof dressing.
 - f. You are bloodletting.

- g. You have a skin infection.
- h. You are handling any blood-soiled items, body fluids, excretions or secretions, or touching any contaminated surfaces, materials, or objects.

YOUR SAFE DISPOSAL OF EQUIPMENT AND CLINICAL WASTE

You must dispose of used equipment and clinical waste legally, safely and in accordance with current legislation.

- 44. You must place all sharps, a non-exhaustive list of which includes needles, plum blossom needles (seven star hammers) and dermal needles (press needles, battlefield needles), into a sharps disposal bin immediately after use.
- 45. You must dispose of sealed sharps containers via a licensed agent.
- 46. You must place all clinical waste contaminated with spillage of body fluids - blood, etc. - into a clinical sharps bin or yellow clinical waste bags for collection by a licensed agent.
- 47. You must retain all contracts and receipts for clinical waste collection for two years for Local Authority Inspection.
- 48. You should treat waste, which has not come into contact with body fluids or spillages, such as needle wrappings and single-use guide tubes, as a commercial or domestic waste for the purposes of disposal.
- 49. You must ensure that your sharps box conforms to the requirements of BS EN ISO 23907:2012 and is clearly marked with the words '*danger – contaminated needles – to be incinerated*'.

YOUR COMMITMENT TO HEALTH AND SAFETY

You must comply with the requirements and provisions of current health and safety at work legislation, especially hazardous waste and fire regulations

- 50. Your duty of care extends not only to patients and employees, but also to any member of the public visiting your premises.
- 51. You must ensure that your premises are safe and that all equipment and machinery on the premises is regularly inspected and maintained.
- 52. You must arrange for regular examination and certification of all electrical and gas appliances.

53. You must carry out an audit in accordance with current fire safety regulations and legislation.
54. You should assess your premises for disability access in line with the Equality Act 2010.
55. You must ensure that you have appropriate equipment and procedures in place in the event of an emergency.