



Clinical Guidelines

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1. Skin Piercing Guidelines – Needle Manipulation and Handling

Because acupuncture needles penetrate the skin it is essential that practitioners take every necessary precaution to prevent the transmission of blood borne diseases. Needle manipulation and handling must be aseptic at all times.

This requires that you:

- Use pre-sterilised single use needles.
- Wash hands for at least 20 seconds using soap or alcohol gel, before and after treating a patient. Practitioners are responsible for maintaining a high level of personal hygiene.
- If using alcohol swabs, a new sterile swab must be used for each patient. The same swab may be used for several sites on the same person.
- Remove the needle from the packaging by grasping only the handle of the needle and avoid touching the shaft.
- Insert the needle swiftly and with correct needle technique.
- After completing treatment, remove the needle and place it into a Medical Sharps container immediately – the sharps container must be in the immediate vicinity of the patient.
- Follow required procedures if needle stick injury should occur (see relevant section 'Procedure for Needle Stick Injury' 2.h).

1.a Precautions when needling

- Pregnant women: Certain acu-points are to be used with caution during pregnancy. LI4, SP6, GB21, BL60 and BL67. However, these points may be useful for the purpose of inducing labour or shortening its duration. In addition caution must be used on any points on the abdomen below the umbilicus or lumbo-sacral region. After the first trimester, caution is also required for any abdominal points above the umbilicus.
- Infants' heads: Acupuncture points on the head should not be needled if the fontanel is not closed
- People with bleeding disorders.

1.b Contraindications to Needling

- Acupuncture should not be carried out if the patient is under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs.
- Do not needle into open wounds.

2. Management of Needling Procedures

2.a Fainting during needle insertion or manipulation

- If a patient faints withdraw any needles already in place.
- Ensure that the patient is lying down and in a position to safely recover.
- Check airways, breathing and circulation.
- Appropriate points such as GV 26 shuigou, PC9 zhangchong, LI4 Hegu, or KD1 may be pressed with a fingernail.
- If the patient is not breathing call for an ambulance and follow appropriate First Aid guidelines.

2.b Stuck Needle

- Leave needle in place for a few minutes (it may loosen by its self)
- Tap or massage around the point
- Needle close by stuck needle
- Moxa muscle spasm

2.c Bent Needle

- If the patient has moved causing the needle to bend, very slowly remove it following the angle of the bend.
- Avoid the use of force when removing the needle.

2.d Broken Needle

- If broken above skin (between handle and shaft), pull out immediately, using tweezers.
- If broken at skin level gently push down surrounding skin and remove with tweezers.
- If broken deep in the tissue mark a circle around point of insertion, immobilise the body part and transfer the patient to hospital.

2.e Bruising and Bleeding

- Bruising or bleeding may occur from the removal of an acupuncture needle.
- Apply direct pressure with a clean swab or cotton ball until the bleeding has stopped.

2.f Seizures

- If the patient is unconscious, remove any needles and manage in accordance with current First Aid procedures.
- Points such as Du26, LI4 or KD1 may be pressed with the fingernail.
- Refer the patient to their GP or the nearest hospital.

2.g Pneumothorax

- If a pneumothorax is suspected (signs may include chest pain, tightness, dry cough, shortness of breath on exertion) remove needles immediately and call an ambulance.
- It is important to note that symptoms of a pneumothorax may not be present until some time after acupuncture treatment.

2.h Needle Stick Injury to Practitioner

- Remove needle
- Squeeze the area to promote bleeding.
- Swab area with alcohol; if not available wash thoroughly with soap and water.
- Ensure the incident is documented, including date, time and patient who had been needled.
- Seek medical care, such as undergoing a HIV and Hepatitis antibody test

3. Management of Sharps and Waste

- All needles are to be placed directly into an approved sharps container after removal from the patient
- The sharps container must be in the immediate vicinity of the patient
- The sharps containers should be filled only to the recommended level and disposed of when that level has been reached.
- When the sharps containers are being moved the lids should be firmly in place.
- Plastic liners must be used in bins for all other waste.

4. Guidelines for the Use of Moxibustion

NZRA Rule 24 States.

"In certain cases consent of the patient may be required before treatment can take place. Direct scarring moxibustion is to be used only when the patient is made aware of the consequences of this procedure and also gives informed written consent for the procedure to be made."

4.a Precautions for the use of Moxibustion

- Explain to the patient the moxibustion technique you are intending to use prior to using it.
- Ask the patient to indicate to you immediately if the sensation of heat is too strong.

4.b Contraindications for the use of Moxibustion

- Acupoints contraindicated for moxibustion e.g. BL1
- Impaired skin sensation, including patients taking analgesic medication
- Infections and open wounds

5. Guidelines for Cupping

5.a Precautions for Cupping

- Explain the procedure of cupping to the patient and ask to be informed if the procedure is too uncomfortable.
- The use of glass or plastic cups is recommended
- Advise the patient of the possibility of bruising.
- Care must be taken not to overheat the cups before placement on the body
- Cups must be washed with hot water and detergent after every patient.

5.b Contraindications for cupping

- Areas over skin ulcers
- Oedema
- Any area overlying a large blood vessel
- During high fever and convulsions
- Over abdominal or sacral areas on pregnant women.

6. Guidelines for Electro-Acupuncture

6.a Guidelines for Electro- Acupuncture

- Advise the patient of the procedure of electro-acupuncture and to inform you if the sensation is too strong.
- Electrodes should be attached so that the current does not cross the upper body.

6.b Contraindications for Electro- Acupuncture

- Pregnancy – although electro-acupuncture may be used for pain relief in labour.
- Patients with a pacemaker

7. Guidelines for Laser Acupuncture

7.a Guidelines for Laser Acupuncture

- The operator must make sure that the apparatus has been serviced and checked regularly by the appropriate technician.
- Explain the procedure of laser therapy to the patient
- Warn the patient not to look into the beam produced by the laser probe as it can damage the eyes.

7.b Contraindications for Laser Acupuncture

- Direct irradiation of the eyes
- Pregnancy

8 Guidelines for Bloodletting and Dermal Hammer.

8.a Guidelines for Bloodletting or Dermal Hammer

- Single use lancets or dermal hammers must be used.
- Explain the procedure to the patient before proceeding.

8.a Contraindications for Bloodletting or Dermal Hammer

- Those with a weak constitution
- Pregnant women
- Those with bleeding disorders or those on blood thinning medication

9. Guidelines for the Use of Press Needles

- Only pre-sterilised press needles are acceptable. The same levels of hygiene are to be maintained as for all needling.
- Explain the procedure to the patient, informing them to remove the needle should it become uncomfortable or irritating.

10. CLINICAL PREMISES REQUIREMENTS

The premises must be suitable for an acupuncture clinic. Premises must be kept in good repair and kept clean, tidy and hygienic. This includes floors, walls, windows, furniture, light shades as well as the area used for acupuncture. NZRA members are responsible for meeting the requirements of their local Council bylaws.

Premises must meet the following NZRA requirements:

Access

Patients must be able to easily get into the clinic.

If there are steps they must be stable, not too steep and with an appropriate handrail.

Heating, Light and Ventilation

Clinic space must be warm, well lit and have adequate ventilation. If moxa is being used then a window must be able to be opened, or an extraction fan or air conditioner available to clear any smoke.

Linen and Soft Furnishings

All towels, sheets, pillows must be clean and tidy.

Any furniture coverings must be clean and in good repair.

Toilet and Hand Basin

Toilet and hand basin must be easily accessible, hygienic, clean and tidy. NZRA recommends the use of a liquid soap dispenser and paper towels.

Waste Disposal

Approved sharps container must be in the immediate vicinity of all treatment areas, and lined bins used for all other waste. Bins must be emptied regularly.

Fire Safety and Fire Extinguisher

Fire exits must be clearly marked and free of any obstruction. A fire extinguisher should be readily at hand.