

Change Notification for the UK Blood and Tissue Services

Notification date	30 June 2026
Effective date	11 August 2026
Implementation	To be determined by each Service

CN 17-2026

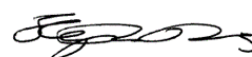
Eligibility of blood donors undergoing acupuncture

Content changed	Type of change	Guidelines affected
1 Acupuncture	New entry	Whole blood
2 Complementary therapy	Updated entry	Whole blood
3 'See if relevant' links	Updated hyperlinks	Whole blood



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Note: this document indicates inserted and ~~deleted~~ text. This formatting will not apply in the published text.

1. Acupuncture

Guidelines affected	Reason for change
Whole blood	This is a new entry.

Essential information

<u>Definition/s</u>	<u>Acupuncture</u> is a specific complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) treatment, involving the insertion of fine needles into the skin. <u>A Qualified Health Care Professional (HCP)</u> is someone who is registered with one of the statutory bodies listed in the 'Complementary and alternative medicine' entry.
<u>Obligatory</u>	<u>Must not donate if:</u> <u>The condition for which treatment was given is not acceptable, or</u> <u>It is less than 4 months from acupuncture treatment</u> <u>If the donor has received any other CAM or cosmetic/beauty treatment:</u> <u>See 'Complementary and Alternative Medicine'</u>
<u>Discretionary</u>	<u>If the donor's underlying condition does not preclude donation and the acupuncture treatment was:</u> <u>Performed within the NHS, or</u> <u>Performed by a Qualified Health Care Professional (HCP), or</u> <u>Performed in one of the four UK nations by a practitioner acting in accordance with the legislation applying to licensing/registration in that nation.</u> <u>AND</u> <u>Acupuncture was performed with sterile single-use needles, accept.</u>

Supporting information

<u>See if relevant</u>	<u>For a list of Qualified HCPs, see 'Complementary and alternative medicine'</u>
<u>Additional information</u>	<u>Acupuncture involves a risk that infection could be transferred between or introduced to patients if unsterile needles are used. It is important that an</u>

acupuncturist adheres to safe practices, including the use of sterile single-use needles for all patients.

Acupuncturists who are Qualified HCPs are subject to discipline from statutorily constituted professional authorities. They will have received training in infection control where this is relevant to their work and are expected to follow safe practices at all times. They should not be working outside the scope of practice for which they have received training.

Each of the four UK nations has registration and licensing requirements for acupuncture providers. For non-HCP practitioners, donors can be accepted if acupuncture was provided in an appropriately licensed/approved setting by a practitioner who is fully compliant with any licensing/registration requirements in force within their area of operation. Donor services staff do not have to confirm the licensing or registration status of a practitioner or premises. The donor should be asked to confirm that single-use needles were used and that they are satisfied that their practitioner was working in compliance with local registration and licensing requirements. If there is doubt about the status of an acupuncture service, the donor should be deferred for 4 months.

Further information can be found in the JPAC position statement 'Eligibility of blood donors undergoing acupuncture'.

Regulatory information

Part of this entry is a requirement of the Blood Safety and Quality Regulations 2005.

2. Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) ~~therapy~~

Guidelines affected	Reason for change
Whole blood	This entry has been renamed from 'Complementary therapy'. Guidance for acupuncture treatment has been removed from this entry, and users are now directed to a new 'Acupuncture' entry.

Essential information

<u>Definition/s</u>	<u>Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is treatment that falls outside of mainstream healthcare. For the purposes of donor selection, this definition includes cosmetic/beauty treatments such as cosmetic fillers.</u> <u>A Qualified Health Care Professional (HCP) is someone who is registered with one of the statutory bodies listed below.</u>
<u>Excludes</u>	<u>Acupuncture – see 'Acupuncture'</u>
Obligatory	Must not donate if: 1. The condition for which treatment was given is not acceptable. 2. It is less than 4 months from any treatment that involves: • piercing the skin (e.g. acupuncture) • drawing blood (e.g. wet cupping) • an invasive procedure (e.g. colonic irrigation)
Discretionary	1. If oral or topical complementary medicines only and reason for which treatment was given is acceptable, accept. 2. For all other therapies: Performed within the NHS If performed by NHS staff on NHS premises including GP surgeries, accept. Performed outside of the NHS If performed by a Qualified Health Care Professional registered with the: a. General Medical Council (GMC), b. Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), c. General Dental Council (GDC), d. The General Chiropractic Council (GCC),

- e. The General Optical Council (GOC),
- f. The General Osteopathic Council (GOsC),
- g. General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC),
- h. Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI),
- i. The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) (which regulates Physiotherapists, Arts therapists, Biomedical Scientists, Chiropodists/Podiatrists, Clinical Scientists, Dieticians, Hearing Aid Dispensers, Occupational Therapists, Operating Department Practitioners, Orthoptists, Paramedics, Practitioner Psychologists, Prosthetists and Orthotists, Radiographers and Speech and Language Therapists), accept.

Supporting information

Additional information

Therapies which are invasive or which breach the skin may pass infection from person to person if strict hygiene procedures are not followed.

Therapists who are Qualified Health Care Professionals (HCP) are subject to discipline from statutorily constituted professional authorities. They will have received training in infection control where this is relevant to their work and are expected to follow safe practices at all times. They should not be working outside the scope of practice for which they have received training.

For therapists who are not Qualified HCPs, there is less assurance that they are adequately trained in infection control. Although most such practitioners will follow safe practices, there is still a requirement to defer any of their patients or clients who have received a treatment which meets the deferral criteria above. Waiting 4 months after treatment means any new infection should be detected when a donation is tested by the blood services.

~~Equipment that has been reused has passed infection from person to person. Therapists who are subject to discipline from statutorily constituted professional authorities are expected to follow safe practices.~~

This guidance presumes that a validated NAT test for hepatitis C is negative. If this test is stopped, the guidance will change.

~~When there is any doubt about infection being passed on, waiting four months means infections are more likely to be picked up by the tests used by the blood services.~~

Regulatory information

~~Part of this entry is a requirement of the Blood Safety and Quality Regulations 2005.~~

3. 'See if relevant' links

Guidelines affected	Reason for change
Whole blood	Update of 'See if relevant' links due to the renaming of the 'Complementary therapy' entry as 'Complementary and alternative medicine'.

For each entry below, the 'See if relevant' links will be updated as shown:

Entry	Link to be removed	Link(s) to be added
Clinical trials	Complementary therapy	Complementary and alternative medicine
Osteoarthritis	Complementary therapy	Complementary and alternative medicine
Smoking cessation	Complementary therapy (acupuncture)	Acupuncture