

**AIDS : guidelines for acupuncturists : don't die of ignorance / prepared by the Department of Health and Social Security and the Central Office of Information.**

### **Contributors**

Great Britain. Department of Health and Social Security.  
Great Britain. Central Office of Information.

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Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

# AIDS



# GUIDELINES FOR ACUPUNCTURISTS

**DON'T DIE OF IGNORANCE**

## WHAT IS THE RISK?

No one has ever been known to catch the AIDS virus from acupuncture. And no one should in future either, if the procedures given here are always followed.

The risk involved with any one patient is remote. But in the interests both of your patients and of yourself, safe procedures are essential because of the number of patients you work with every day and because it is not possible to tell whether a person is infected or not.

Because the AIDS virus is carried in blood, it is vital that any equipment which has been contaminated with blood is sterilized before re-use.

Although this leaflet has been published as part of the Government publicity about AIDS, the procedures followed will also protect your patients and yourself against hepatitis B, a more familiar but also serious risk.

## AIDS AND HEPATITIS B

AIDS is caused by a virus which damages the body's defences against infection. AIDS virus infection is spread almost entirely by sexual intercourse or the transfer of blood from an infected person to another.

Hepatitis B is also caused by a virus and is transmitted in much the same way as the AIDS virus. It can produce severe illness with jaundice.

## RECOMMENDED PROCEDURES



Do not test needles on your own skin at any time.

Whenever possible use pre-sterilized disposable needles. They should be used once only, and then discarded.

Re-usable needles must be sterilized, as must metal forceps and dishes before they are used.

## SKIN PREPARATION

Do not use sharp or pointed instruments on or near areas of a patient's skin that are obviously diseased or inflamed.

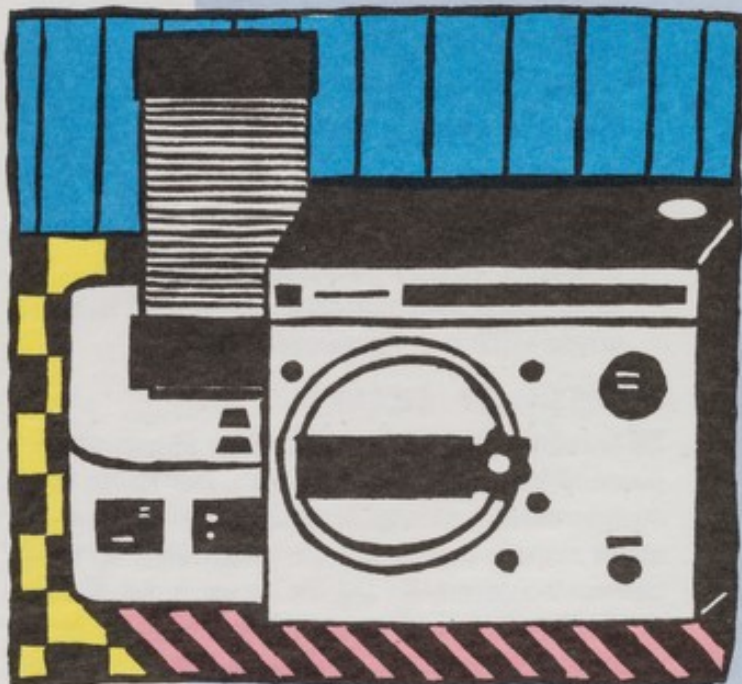
## STERILIZATION

The best way to sterilize needles and instruments is in an autoclave. The autoclave you choose should be fully automatic, so that all you need to do is top it up with water, close it and press a button.

At the time of going to print (November 1987), a low cost pressure sterilizer is under development which may be a suitable alternative to an autoclave. Your Environmental Health Department will be able to advise on its availability.

A recommended glass bead sterilizer is a possible alternative for very light objects which can withstand heating at high temperatures.

Ultraviolet (UV) cabinets are not capable of sterilizing instruments properly.





### GENERAL HYGIENE

- Use disposable equipment whenever possible.
- Keep everything clean. Floors should be regularly cleaned, carpets vacuumed and surfaces washed.
- Wash your hands between patients.
- Disinfect work surfaces regularly.

### CUTS ON YOUR HANDS

- Cover existing wounds with a waterproof dressing. Wash fresh cuts, encourage bleeding under running water and then cover with a waterproof dressing.

### DISPOSAL OF 'SHARPS'

Be careful when throwing away sharp or pointed instruments ('sharps'). Put them in a commercially available 'sharps' container or other secure box or plastic bottle first so they cannot accidentally injure anyone. Advice on the collection or disposal of 'sharps' can be obtained from the local Environmental Health Department.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

This leaflet gives general guidance only. More information and advice is available from your local Environmental Health Department. Also see *A Code of Practice* issued by the Council for Acupuncture.

Other leaflets in this series include:

*Guidelines for unregistered chiropodists*

*Guidelines for ear piercers*

*Guidelines for electrolysis*

*Guidelines for hairdressers and barbers*

*Guidelines for tattooists*

There is a free, attractive poster available which covers the general hygiene points made in this leaflet.

If you would like to order more leaflets or the poster, phone 0800 555 777 (24 hours). You won't be charged for your call.

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