

# **ACUPUNCTURE RISKS AND SAFETY NOTICE**

## **Is acupuncture treatment safe?**

Acupuncture practised by a properly trained practitioner is a very safe therapy. Serious side effects from the treatment itself are very rare – less than one per 10,000 treatments.

## **Does acupuncture have side-effects?**

You need to be aware that:

- drowsiness occurs after treatment in a small number of patients, and, if affected, you are advised not to drive
- minor bleeding or bruising occurs after treatment in about 3% of treatments
- pain during treatment occurs in about 1% of treatments
- existing symptoms can get worse after treatment (less than 3% of patients)
- fainting can occur in certain patients, particularly at the first treatment.

## **Are there any other risks from treatment?**

Acupuncture is a skin piercing technique, and like all other skin piercing techniques carries a risk of cross infection. In the case of acupuncture these risks are minimised:

- by the use of single-use, sterile, disposable needles only
- by the practitioner following strict guidelines laid down by the Scottish Executive and the British Acupuncture Council and developed by leading experts in the field of skin piercing.

## **Is there anything I can do to reduce the risks?**

You can reduce the risks yet further by ensuring that your practitioner knows anything about you which might increase the risk of treatment, such as a history of fits, faint or funny turns, a pacemaker or any other electrical implant, a bleeding disorder, use of anti-coagulant medication like warfarin, or damaged heart valves. Each of these carries a small additional risk which a well-trained practitioner can take account of in their treatment planning.