

Scope of Practice Explanatory Statement

Traditional Chinese Medicine
and Acupuncture

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of three overlapping, stylized mountain peaks. The peaks are rendered in shades of purple, with the top peak being the darkest and the bottom peak being the lightest. The peaks are jagged and layered, creating a sense of depth and movement.

April 1, 2026



This Scope of Practice Explanatory Statement provides supplemental guidance to the traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture scope of practice statement under the *Health Professions and Occupations Act* (HPOA) regulation. It is designed to help licensees understand the limits, conditions, and out of scope activities that shape which diagnostic, therapeutic, procedural, and prescriptive activities are permitted, to support consistent, safe, and lawful practice. It consists of two parts:

1. Scope of Practice Statement under the *Complementary Health Professionals Regulation*
2. Explanatory Statement:
 - a. Restricted Activities
 - b. Limits and Conditions
 - c. Out of Scope Activities

Scope of Practice Statement

Scope of practice statements in regulation set out broadly what each regulated health professional may do. These statements are not exhaustive lists of every service the profession may provide, nor do they exclude other regulated professions or unregulated persons from providing services that fall within a particular profession's scope of practice. Some aspects of the scope of practice of a regulated health professional may overlap or be shared with those of another regulated health profession. Restricted activities, on the other hand, are defined higher-risk activities only allowed to be performed by authorized professionals or persons who have been appropriately delegated the activity.

Under the [Professional Standard: Scope of Practice](#), licensees must provide safe and competent care, maintain current knowledge and skills, and practice only within their individual and professional scope. Licensees are also responsible for ensuring they do not provide false or misleading information to patients or the public, and that their activities align with the limits and conditions established in legislation and regulation.



Complementary Health Professionals Regulation

Scope of practice for traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture

26(1) *The following types of health services, provided primarily for the purposes set out in subsection (2) and based on traditional Chinese medicine theories and principles, constitute the scope of practice for traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture:*

(a) *assessing the health status of patients for the purpose of providing the health services referred to in paragraph (b);*

(b) *preventing, treating and managing physical and mental diseases, disorders and conditions by using one or more of the following techniques, therapies and therapeutics:*

(i) *acupuncture;*

(ii) *traditional Chinese herbs, formulae or food cure recipes;*

(iii) *manipulative therapy;*

(iv) *Chinese energy regulation therapy, Chinese shadow boxing or other types of energetic exercise therapies;*

(c) *advising on physical and mental health.*

(2) *The primary purposes for providing health services in the practice of traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture are the following:*

(a) *to promote, maintain and restore physical and mental health;*

(b) *to relieve pain.*



Licensees may continue to use adjunctive diagnostic and therapeutic procedures that are in the public domain provided they have the knowledge, skills and competence to perform the activity and that it is applied directly within scope of practice, including but not limited to:

- i. electrotherapies, including TENS and therapeutic ultrasound
- ii. Shockwave
- iii. light therapy

Explanatory Statement

Restricted Activities

The new regulations under the HPOA do not limit or reduce any profession's existing scope of practice they had under the *Health Professions Act*. This includes the continued authorization to perform the following restricted activities:

Diagnosis

(a) *diagnose a disease, disorder or condition that the licensee is authorized under the scope of practice for traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture*

Procedures

(b) *perform a procedure on tissue below the dermis*

(c) *perform a procedure on the tissue below the surface of a mucous membrane*



Herbal Medicine

The Ministry of Health has been directed by the Minister of Health to make changes to regulations under the HPOA to clarify that activities related to Chinese herbal formulae **are restricted and fall under the purview of regulated/licensed traditional Chinese medicine practitioners, doctors of traditional Chinese medicine, and traditional Chinese medicine herbalists**. Visit the Ministry's [Professional Regulation and Oversight](#) webpage for updates on the status of this work.

For clarity, the scope of practice for the following licensees related to herbal medicine, including TCM herbs and herbal formulae has not changed.

- **Doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine: Full**
- **Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioner: Full**
- **Traditional Chinese Medicine Herbalist: Full**

Are authorized to:

- Prescribe, compound, and dispense herbal medicines including but not limited to:
 - TCM herbs
 - TCM herbal formulae
 - TCM food cure recipes
- Formulate and apply:
 - Custom topical herbal products including TCM herbal products for individual patients
- Recommend:
 - Health Canada approved Natural Health Products with a Natural Product Number (NPN) – including vitamins, minerals and other Health Canada licensed natural health products - as adjuncts to the treatment **provided these products are applied within the licensee's scope of practice.**



Limits and Conditions

The following section outlines the limits and conditions that apply to the practice of traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture in BC.

Acupuncture for Induction of Labour

Licensees authorized to perform acupuncture may provide treatment to patients seeking acupuncture to induce labour but it is outside the scope of practice for licensees to manage labour itself (see Out of Scope Activities and Guidance Acupuncture for Induction of Labour: Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture).

Dietary Guidelines

Acupuncturist: Full may provide **dietary guidelines** informed by traditional Chinese medicine principles as an adjunct to acupuncture treatment; however, recommending or designing food cure recipes is not within scope.

Herbal Medicine

- Licensees authorized to compound and/or dispense herbs and herbal formulae including but not limited to TCM herbs and herbal formulae **must** adhere to all requirements in Section 5 of the [Safety Program Handbook](#), including the labelling guidelines outlined in section 5.4.4.
- **Acupuncturist: Full**, may apply pre-made, Health Canada approved **topical** herbal products including TCM herbal products, for individual patients provided they are used as part of a traditional Chinese medicine acupuncture treatment.

TCM Aesthetic Practices

Licensees authorized to perform acupuncture must ensure that treatments for aesthetic purposes are applied within scope of practice.

Devices must be approved by Health Canada.

Licensees are **not** authorized to:

- apply topical drugs such as but not limited to anesthetic agents including numbing creams
- provide injectable therapies using any substance including drugs and/or

- injectable fillers
- implant or embed any substance beneath the skin (e.g., threads)

Tuina & Acupressure

The *Complementary Health Professionals Regulation's* definition of acupuncture includes acupressure and, although not expressly named, encompasses tuina. Licensees authorized to perform acupuncture may include acupressure and tuina as part of the treatment services they offer provided these activities are carried out within the licensee's scope of practice and in accordance with Out of Scope Activities.

Laser Therapies

Licensees must ensure that laser therapies are applied within scope of practice.

Devices must meet CSA standards and be approved by Health Canada.

Low Power Lasers

Non-pulsed visible lasers that have a power output of less than 1.0 milliwatt (class 1, 2, and 3a) are considered low power.

The use of class 1, 2 or 3a lasers requires:

- a. protective eyewear for patients and staff as specified by the manufacturer.
- b. a laser warning sign on the device.

High Power Lasers

Lasers that have a power output of 1.0 - 5.0 milliwatts (class 3b and 4) are considered to be high power.

The use of class 3b or 4 lasers requires:

- a. protective eyewear for patients and staff as specified by the manufacturer
- b. a laser warning sign on the device.
- c. a laser warning sign in the area of use.

Licensees must meet all federal and provincial requirements respecting the use of lasers in practice.

A qualified **Laser Safety Officer (LSO)** must be designated and properly trained in all relevant settings.



Out of Scope Activities

The following sections outline the out of scope activities that apply to the practice of traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture in BC.

- (a)** Tuina techniques (manipulative therapy) that move a joint of the spine beyond the limits the body can voluntarily achieve but within the anatomical range of motion using a high velocity, low amplitude thrust, or reduce dislocations of joints.
- (b)** Administer by injection a substance or Schedule III drug (e.g. Point Injection Therapy, Platelet Rich Plasma)
- (c)** Any other procedure that constitutes restricted activities outside their authorized scope of practice, as outlined in the [Regulated Health Practitioners Regulation](#) including but not limited to:
 - (i)** apply ultrasound for diagnostic or imaging purposes
 - (ii)** manage labour or delivery of a baby
 - (iii)** reduce a dislocation of a joint

Herbal Medicine

Acupuncturist: Full are **not** authorized to:

- Prescribe, compound, or dispense herbal medicines including but not limited to TCM herbs or herbal formulae, or food cure recipes nor recommend Health Canada approved Natural Health Products that have a Natural Product Number (NPN) - including vitamins, minerals and other natural products licensed by Health Canada – as adjuncts to treatment.