

▶ WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CHINESE MEDICINE COUNCIL?

The CMCNZ ensures that Chinese medicine practitioners are fit and competent to practise, aiming to protect you, the public. They set high standards for entry, clinical and cultural competence, and ethical conduct. The Council registers practitioners, recertifies them annually, and makes enquiries into any concerns raised about their conduct, competence, or health.

The CMCNZ also accredits Chinese medicine educational programmes, defines scopes of practice, and maintains a public register of practitioners. They issue practising certificates and require ongoing professional development. If necessary, they can restrict or suspend a practitioner's practice to protect public health and safety. The Council's role is to enforce standards fairly and effectively, ensuring your safety.

It's important to know that regulatory bodies like the CMCNZ and professional bodies serve different roles. The CMCNZ governs the Chinese medicine profession, registers practitioners, sets policy and standards, and deals with disciplinary matters while professional bodies support and advocate for practitioners. The CMCNZ is appointed by the Government under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 to regulate the profession and ensure public health and safety. If you want to check if a practitioner is registered, you can look them up on the CMCNZ's online register.

▶ CAN CHINESE MEDICINE PRACTITIONERS TREAT UNDER ACC?

Since December 2024, only Chinese medicine practitioners registered with the CMCNZ and holding a current Annual Practising Certificate (APC) can provide ACC-covered Chinese medicine treatment for injury-related conditions.

▶ REGULATION OF CHINESE MEDICINE IN NEW ZEALAND

In New Zealand, Chinese medicine is a regulated profession, ensuring safety and quality of care. Practitioners must be registered with the Chinese Medicine Council of New Zealand (CMCNZ), which guarantees they have reputable qualifications and are competent to treat patients. Registered practitioners typically undergo extensive training in various modalities, including acupuncture, moxibustion, cupping, Chinese herbal medicine, and tuina (Chinese massage). After a thorough history-taking and diagnosis, practitioners apply centuries-old techniques to facilitate healing.

The CMCNZ oversees the regulation of Chinese medicine qualifications and competence, providing reassurance to the public about the practitioner's skills and expertise. This regulatory framework ensures that practitioners meet high standards, offering safe and effective care to their patients.

▶ WHAT TO EXPECT DURING A CHINESE MEDICINE TREATMENT

When you first visit, the practitioner will ask about your health, symptoms, lifestyle, and medical history. Looking at the tongue and taking the pulse is also an important part of Chinese medicine diagnosis. Based on what the practitioner finds, they will develop a treatment plan just for you. This plan could include acupuncture, herbal medicine, advice on what to eat, and changes to your lifestyle.

During the treatment, if acupuncture is part of your plan, fine needles will be put into specific points on your body. You might feel a little tingle or warmth. You might also be given herbal medicine to take at home. Depending on your condition, other treatments like cupping, moxibustion (the burning of the herb artemisia over specific acupuncture points or areas of the body), or tuina (Chinese massage) might be used as part of your treatment.



CONSUMER FACT SHEET

Understanding Chinese
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▶ WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE NOT HAPPY WITH THE SERVICE OR HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT A CHINESE MEDICINE PRACTITIONER?

If you are unhappy with the service from a Chinese medicine practitioner in New Zealand or if you have concerns about a Chinese medicine practitioner, here's what you can do:

First, talk to your practitioner. Contact them directly to discuss your concerns and be clear about what you want to happen. It might help to have a support person with you during this conversation. If the issue isn't resolved, you can consider contacting the Health and Disability Advocacy Service to assist you in resolving the issue with the practitioner/practice directly.

If you feel the matter has still not been addressed to your satisfaction, you can consider making a formal complaint to the Office of the Health and Disability Commissioner (HDC). The HDC can give you advice on what to do next, including how to get support, and how to make a complaint. The HDC considers all complaints in the first instance and will look at your complaint in relation to whether there may have been a breach to the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights (the Code). The HDC may decide to refer the complaint to the Chinese Medicine Council of New Zealand (CMCNZ) if they think the matter is more appropriately looked into or addressed by the Council. You can find information about the HDC and the Code on their website located at www.hdc.org.nz

▶ HOW DO I KNOW IF MY PRACTITIONER IS COMPETENT?

Chinese medicine practitioners in New Zealand must be registered with the Chinese Medicine Council of New Zealand (CMCNZ). This ensures they have the right qualifications and skills to treat patients. You can check if your practitioner is registered by looking them up on the CMCNZ's online register. It is illegal for someone to call themselves a Chinese medicine practitioner if they are not registered.

▶ HOW ARE CHINESE MEDICINE PRACTITIONERS TRAINED?

Chinese medicine practitioners in New Zealand undergo extensive education and training to ensure they are competent and qualified. They must complete a recognised qualification in Chinese medicine, which includes studying subjects like acupuncture, herbal medicine, and Chinese massage (tuina). These programmes combine theoretical knowledge with practical experience, allowing students to develop the necessary skills to practise safely and effectively.

Practitioners must be registered with the Chinese Medicine Council of New Zealand (CMCNZ). To register, they need to hold a prescribed qualification, be considered fit for registration, and demonstrate competence in their designated scope of practice. This includes clinical, ethical, and cultural competence.

The CMCNZ also accredits and monitors Chinese medicine programmes to ensure the quality of education and training. Practitioners are required to undertake continuing professional development to maintain their competence and stay updated with the latest advancements in the field. This ongoing education helps practitioners provide the best possible care to their patients.

▶ QUESTIONS TO ASK A CHINESE MEDICINE PRACTITIONER

Before your first appointment, consider asking the following questions:

- Are you registered with the Chinese Medicine Council of New Zealand (CMCNZ)?
- What is your experience with treating my specific condition?
- What treatment methods do you recommend and why?
- Are there any side effects or risks associated with the treatments?
- How long will the treatment take, and how many sessions will I need?
- What should I do to prepare for my treatment?
- What information is important for my GP to know about these treatments?
- Can you provide information on the safety and sourcing of any herbal medicines prescribed?

▶ WHAT IS CHINESE MEDICINE?

Chinese medicine is a comprehensive system of healthcare that originated in China to prevent and treat diseases. In New Zealand, Chinese medicine is recognised as a safe and regulated profession within the healthcare system. This approach to health focuses on prevention and uses a range of treatments, including acupuncture, moxibustion (using the herb *Artemisia vulgaris*), herbal medicine, cupping, gua sha (scraping the skin), tuina (Chinese massage), martial arts like tai chi and qi gong, dietary therapy, and lifestyle changes.

Chinese medicine views the human body as an interconnected whole, closely linked to nature. Practitioners strive to restore balance between a person, their body, relationships, and the natural and spiritual worlds, including ancestors. This holistic approach treats the person as a whole, rather than just addressing symptoms. The theory behind Chinese medicine is rooted in Daoist philosophy, which does not separate the mind and body. In the West, Chinese medicine is best known for practices like acupuncture, herbal medicine, moxibustion, cupping, and gua sha. It also takes into account diet and lifestyle factors.

Chinese medicine practitioners provide evidence-informed services, using the Chinese medicine framework to assess, diagnose, and manage the physical and mental health of clients. They employ a medical model that has been in practice for centuries, allowing them to take a history, diagnose, and treat diseases.

