Is the procedure sterile and are there any side-effects? (Ecchymosis)
The cups are cleaned with anti-microbial wipes and made from a clean non-porous plastic.

Excessive suctioning can cause bruising and delayed healing. However, a normal byproduct of cupping is the phenomenon of Ecchymosis which is the presence of red oxygenated blood at the skin’s surface. These are not ruptured red blood cells as in the case of bruising.

This will slowly fade, over the next few days or following week after static cupping treatment. Cupping massage generally does not give Ecchymosis.

The BCS has trained dozens of health professionals throughout the world and the AACP in the UK, and audits have revealed that no side effects (excessive delayed healing or skin infection) have ever been reported by their graduates.

Does the patient need specific preparation prior to treatment such as fasting, dieting etc?
There is no need to fast. However, avoid heavy meals prior to treatment. Light breakfast is recommended on the day of the treatment. Cupping can be performed at any time. Most people return to normal activity instantly your practitioner will inform you if any precautions need to be taken. Patients are advised to monitor or ask someone at home to monitor the treatment site in case of any problems.

References:
Leaflet adapted from: BCS = British Cupping Society (http://www.britishcuppingsociety.org/)

Supportive research:
Definition
“Cupping therapy is an ancient medical treatment that relies upon creating a local suction to mobilise blood flow in order to promote healing.” (British Cupping Society 2008).

Brief history of cupping therapy
The use of cupping therapy is documented in the history of most great cultures and civilisations of the past with the earliest available records revealing extensive use by the ancient Egyptians, Chinese and Middle Eastern cultures. In the west, cupping therapy was part of the basic repertoire of clinical skills a doctor would be expected to understand and practice until the latter part of the 19th century. In parts of Western Europe there has been a recent upsurge in the interest from both public and academic perspectives. Scientific studies have begun researching the effects of cupping therapy in an attempt to better understand the mechanisms underpinning this fascinating medical treatment that has truly withstood the test of time. Celebrity endorsements by professional sports players, celebrities, and senior international politicians.

Types of cupping therapy
Broadly speaking, there are the two forms, dry and wet cupping therapy. The dry version is taught by the Acupuncture Association of Chartered Physiotherapists (AACP) and this is the version used in this service.

Benefits of cupping therapy
Cupping therapy has successfully been used to treat a broad range of medical conditions such as; blood disorders, rheumatic diseases (arthritic joint and muscular conditions), fertility, skin problems etc, as well as improving general physical and psychological well-being.

In this service it will only be used for improving tight or injurated muscle and skin tissue and in similar ways to acupuncture for overall healing promotion and pain reduction.

What does the procedure involve and is it safe?
When practiced by health professionals trained in cupping therapy, the procedure is relatively straight forward and very safe. A mild suction is created using a cup and a pump on the selected treatment area and left for approximately three minutes. The cup is then removed. The cup may also be gently moved to facilitate tissue tightness release (Cupping massage).

The BCS/AACSP strongly recommends treatment should only be sought from health professionals.