



8 Powerful Ancient Qigong Exercises for Cultivating Healing Energy in the Body

What is Qigong and Why is it Essential?


Qigong (pronounced: chee-gun), which combines meditative and physically active elements, is the basic exercise system within Chinese medicine. Qigong exercises are designed to help you preserve your Jing, strengthen and balance the flow of Qi energy, and enlighten your Shen.


Its dynamic exercises and meditations have Yin and Yang aspects: The Yin is being it; the Yang is doing it. Yin Qigong exercises are expressed through relaxed stretching, visualization, and breathing.

Yang Qigong exercises are expressed in a more aerobic or dynamic way. They are particularly effective for supporting the immune system. In China, Qigong is used extensively for people with cancer.

Qigong's physical and spiritual routines move Qi energy through the Twelve Primary Channels and Eight Extra Channels, balancing it, smoothing the flow, and strengthening it. Chinese medicine uses Qigong exercises to maintain health, prevent illness, and extend longevity because it is a powerful tool for maintaining and restoring harmony to the Organ Systems, Essential Substances, and Channels. Qigong is also used for non-medical purposes, such as for fighting and for pursuing enlightenment.

Anyone of any age or physical condition can do Qigong. You don't have to be able to run a marathon or bench press a car to pursue healthfulness and enjoy the benefits.



A close-up photograph of two hands in a Qigong gesture, with fingers interlaced and palms facing each other. The hands are positioned on either side of a central white text box. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

When you design your Qigong exercise/ meditation practice, you will pick what suits your individual constitution. Some of us are born with one type of constitution, some with another. We each have inherited imbalances that we cannot control but with which we must work. That's why for some people it is easier to achieve balance and strength than it is for others. But whatever your nature, Qigong can help you become the most balanced you can be.

Qigong is truly a system for a lifetime. That's why so many people over age sixty in China practice Qigong and Tai Chi. The effects may be powerful, but the routines themselves are usually gentle. Even the dynamic exercises—some of which explode the Qi energy—use forcefulness in different ways than in the West. The following are some effects of Qigong exercises practiced regularly.

Benefits of Regular Practice

Maintaining Health

Qigong exercises help maintain health by creating a state of mental and physical calmness, which indicates that the Qi energy is balanced and harmonious. This allows the mind/body/spirit to function most efficiently, with the least amount of stress.

When you start practicing Qigong exercises, the primary goal is to concentrate on letting go, letting go, letting go. That's because most imbalance comes from holding on to too much for too long. Most of us are familiar with physical strength of muscles, and when we think about exercising, we think in terms of tensing muscles. Qi energy is different. Qi strength is revealed by a smooth, calm, concentrated effort that is free of stress and does not pit one part of the body against another.

The background of the page is a vertical photograph of a lush, green landscape. It features rolling hills, a small cluster of buildings, and a prominent wooden cross on a hillside. The foreground shows a field with some trees and a fence.

Managing Illness

It's harder to remedy an illness than to prevent it, and Qigong has powerful preventive effects. However, when disharmony becomes apparent, Qigong exercises also can play a crucial role in restoring harmony.

Extending Longevity

Qigong movement and postures are shaped by the principle of Yin/Yang: the complementary interrelationship of qualities such as fast and slow, hard and soft, Excess or Deficiency, and External and Internal. Qigong exercises use these contrasting and complementary qualities to restore harmony to the Essential Substances, Organ Systems, and Channels.

In China, the use of Qigong exercises for maintaining health and curing illness did not satisfy those Buddhists and Daoists who engaged in more rigorous self-discipline. They wanted to be able to amplify the power of Qi energy and make the internal organ systems even stronger. This arcane use of Qigong was confined mostly to monasteries and the techniques have not been much publicized. One of the most difficult and profoundly effective techniques is called Marrow Washing Qigong. Practitioners learn to master the intricate manipulation of Qi—infusing the Eight Extraordinary Channels with Qi, and then guiding the Qi energy through the Channels to the bone marrow to cleanse and energize it. The result, according to religious tradition, is that monks can extend their life span to 150 years or more. The Daoists have a saying, "One hundred and twenty years means dying young."

Although few if any of us can devote our lives to the stern practices of the monks, the health benefits of Qigong exercises certainly do improve the quality of life of everyone who practices it.



Waging Combat

Around 500 CE, in the Liang Dynasty, Qigong was adopted by various martial artists to increase stamina and power. For the most part, the breathing, concentration, and agility were assets to the warriors and improved their well-being.

Attaining Enlightenment

Buddhist monks who use Qigong exercises in their pursuit for higher consciousness and enlightenment concentrate on the Qigong's ability to influence their Shen. Mastering Marrow Washing allows the practitioner to gain so much control over the flow of Qi energy that he or she can direct it into the forehead and elevate consciousness. The rest of us can enjoy the influence of Qigong on our Shen (spiritual body/energy), but at a lower level.

Whatever reason you use Qigong, the practice should raise your Qi to a higher state if you increase concentration, practice controlled breathing, and execute the Qigong routines.


The Foundational Techniques


Here are the basic Qigong exercise techniques.

Concentration

Concentration leads to and results from Qi energy awareness, breathing techniques, and Qigong exercises. It is a process of focusing in and letting go at the same time. Focusing does not mean that you wrinkle up your forehead and strain to pay attention.

Instead, through deep relaxation and expanding your consciousness, you are able to create a frame of mind that is large enough to encompass your entire mind – body – spirit's functions; yet focused enough to allow outside distractions, worries, and everyday hassles to drift away.





This inward focus that expands outward to join you with the rhythms of the universe epitomizes Yin/Yang. Yin energy tends to be more expansive, and Yang energy more concentrated. You discover your Yin/Yang balance by treating Yin and Yang as ingredients in a recipe: Add a bit more Yin, toss in a dash of Yang to make the mixture suit your constitution or circumstances.


Some people need more or less Yin or Yang, depending upon the situation. 'Extending the Qi exercise' outlined below provides a clear demonstration of how you can practice establishing your balanced blend of Yin and Yang.


You will find that as you do Qigong exercise and meditation you become more adept at this form of concentration, because it is the natural expression of the practice. As you learn to concentrate more effectively, you will find you have greater power to affect Qi energy through the various Qigong exercises in this chapter or through the use of other focused meditations and Tai Chi.

Breathing

In the sixth century BCE, Lao Tzu first described breathing techniques as a way to stimulate Qi energy. From there, two types of Qigong breathing exercises evolved: Buddha's Breath and Daoist's Breath. Both methods infuse the body with Qi and help focus meditation.

Buddha's Breath: When you inhale, extend your abdomen, filling it with air. When you exhale, contract your abdomen, expelling the air from the bottom of your lungs first and then pushing it up and out until your abdomen and chest are deflated. You may want to practice inhaling for a slow count of eight and exhaling for a count of sixteen. As you breathe in and out, imagine inviting your Qi energy to flow through the Channels. Use your mind to invite the Qi to flow; you want to guide the flow, not tug at it or push it.





Daoist's Breath: The pattern is the opposite of above. When you breathe in, you contract your abdominal muscles. When you exhale, you relax the torso and lungs.

As you travel through these steps, remember that Qigong is a process of building awareness. However you are comfortable doing the routines is what's right for you at that time.

Warm-Up Exercises (10 to 15 min.)

Qigong Exercise One: Gentle Sway

1. For five minutes, move both of your arms from your shoulders in a gentle swinging motion. The motion itself is initiated from your waist: Twist from the waist as though your torso were a washcloth that you were wringing out. Don't twist from the knees or you may harm them. Furthermore, twisting from the waist provides a massage to the internal organs and provides you the full benefits of the exercise.

2. To get started, move your arms side to side across your torso, and then back to front.


3. Keep your knees slightly bent. Let your hips sway. Allow your mind to clear. At first, focus on the release of unnecessary and unconscious stress. After several weeks, you may shift your focus so that you think only about the swaying of your arms and the motion of Qi energy.


This introduces you to the concept of being mindful of the present, much the same concept as found in Zen walking.

Qigong Exercise Two: The Bounce

In the beginning, try this for one to three minutes.

1. With your feet parallel and about shoulder's width apart, bounce with your knees loose and your arms hanging at the sides like a wet noodle. They should feel empty and neutral. This is the zero position for your arms. When you are bouncing back and forth, your arms in zero should have a nice jiggling effect.





2. Keep your shoulders natural; don't pull them back or let them slump forward too much. When the zero position is used on the whole body, you should receive a feeling of deep relaxation and your internal organs and skin should hang down. This process brings awareness of internal tension so that you can do something to dispel it, if you choose.

The combination of exercises one and two gently massages and tonifies the organ systems, which helps promote longevity.

Awareness Exercises

Qigong Exercise Three: Accordion

In this, you feel the Qi energy by using your hands like the bellow of an accordion or a bicycle pump.

- 1. Close your eyes halfway.** Clear your mind and concentrate your attention on your palms.
- 2. Allow your breath to become slow, easy, without force.** In a way, you are creating the very lightest trance.
- 3. Bring your hands together, palms touching and fingers pointing upward.** The palm chakras, called Laogong, located in the center of the palms, should be touching. These chakras are areas where Qi can be felt emanating from the body.
- 4. Slowly move your hands, keeping the chakras aligned.** When they are about 12 inches (30 cm) apart, slowly move them together using the least amount of physical effort possible.
- 5. You will be compressing the air** between them like an accordion would.
- 6. Feel a warm or tingling sensation** at the Laogong points on your palms.

7. Move your hands slowly back and forth, varying the range of the elbows. Repeat the accordion technique in different directions: horizontally, vertically, and diagonally.

This exercise cultivates Qi, builds awareness, and sensitizes yourself. When you feel Qi energy for the first time, it changes your mind-set.

Qigong Exercise Four: Making the Point

1. Using your index finger is a powerful way of directing Qi energy. If you are right-handed, use your right index finger; if you are left-handed, use your left index finger. Point it directly at the flat palm of your other hand. That hand should be perpendicular to the floor with your fingers pointing straight up.

2. Use your index finger like a paintbrush to swab back and forth across your palm.

3. Begin with your fingertip about 8 inches (20 cm) from your palm. Slowly move it closer and farther away, swabbing all the time.

You may feel a tickling sensation, a cooling, or a warming of your palm.

Qigong Exercise Five: Extending the Qi

If you have deficient Qi, you should perform this exercise with your eyes half closed to cultivate and accumulate Qi energy.

1. If you have Stagnant Qi, the exercise may be done with your eyes fully open. You will inhale swiftly through your nostrils with your eyes open or half closed when you exhale.

2. Once you can sense the Qi, exercise your intention (which is the mind/spirit part of the exercise) and use your mind to move your Qi out from your body, expanding the zone in which you are comfortable. You may allow the Qi to drift out on the exhalation and then hold it there as you inhale.

3. First move the Qi into an orbit 1 inch (2.5 cm) from your skin. In increments of 6 inches (15 cm), move it outward, aiming for 3 feet (91 cm), but find the point where you are comfortable with it. Then bring it back in until it returns close to your body.

This Qigong exercise allows you to communicate with your Qi energy. By increasing the distance away from your body that you can feel Qi, you expand your area of comfort—your field of generosity—in the world around you. You will have less fear and greater abilities. By being able to bring your Qi halo in to skin level (or inside your skin) you may become more centered, calm, and self-assured. When you have learned to be comfortable expanding and contracting your Qi, you will feel stronger, healthier, and more in harmony internally and externally.



Reiki



Background

● Reiki (pronounced RAY-key) is an ancient Japanese healing art including light touch and energy work. Reiki, roughly translated, means Spiritually Guided Universal Life-Force Energy. During a treatment, the practitioner acts as a channel for the healing Reiki energy to pass from the Universe, through the hands of the practitioner to the client receiving the treatment. The client relaxes fully clothed on a massage table or chair while the Reiki practitioner holds their hands in a sequence of positions, on or above the client for the purpose of moving energy along energetic meridians to increase flow and clear blockages.

Benefits

● Reiki is very relaxing. Clients may feel warm and nurtured. The hand pressure is typically very gentle; everyone can receive Reiki no matter their age or condition. Hand positions correspond to all organs and systems of the body. Treatments generally last an hour, but may be longer or shorter as indicated.

Considerations

☉ The ability to use Reiki is not taught in the usual sense, but is transferred to the student during an "attunement" given by a Reiki Master and allows the student to tap into an unlimited supply of "life force energy" to improve one's health and enhance the quality of life. While Reiki is spiritual in nature, it is not a religious practice and has no formal dogma, and there is nothing you must believe in order to learn and use Reiki.

Resources

<http://www.reiki.org/>

<https://iarp.org/>

Reflexology



Background

● Reflexology is a non-invasive therapeutic modality involving the use of alternating pressure applied to the feet, hands and outer ears. These pressure points are reputed to connect directly through the nervous system and affect every part of the body, organs and glands. By means of this touching therapy, any part of the body that is the source of pain, illness, or potential debility can be strengthened through the application of pressure at the respective foot or hand location. In the absence of any particular malady or abnormality, reflexology may be effective for promoting good health and for preventing illness, and relieving symptoms of stress, injury, and illness.

Benefits

● The reflexologist may start by asking the client health questions before examining the feet. He or she will gently examine a person's feet while the client sits in a special chair or lies on a massage table, then apply pressure to selected reflex points on the feet, and sometimes the hands and ears. Some people notice areas on the feet that are tender as pressure is applied to them; others may report tingling sensations in other areas of the body while the reflex points are being touched. Most sessions last 30 minutes to 1 hour.

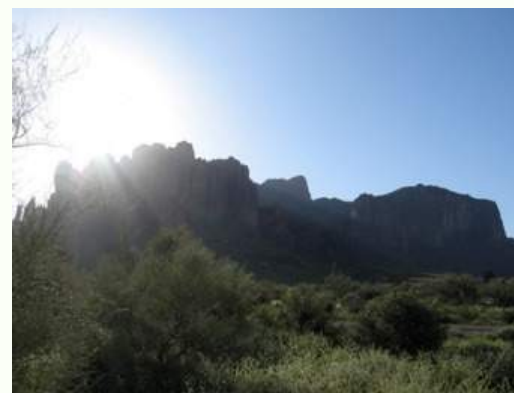
Considerations

- Reflexology has many uses and may be a good alternative for those who cannot tolerate other hands-on bodywork modalities.

Resources

<http://reflexology-usa.org/>

Shamanic Journeys



Background

● In traditional shamanic practices it is believed that part of the soul is free to leave the body. This free soul is believed to leave the body during dreaming. A guided journey, led by a shaman, occurs by a shifting of awareness or consciousness in order to allow part of the soul to leave the body. This is often facilitated by a slow, repetitive rhythm of a drum or rattle. The beat used is very close to the frequency that is measured from the earth. The journey is then achieved by the person's intent.

Benefits

● The Shamanic Journey is a way of finding answers, information, healing, wisdom and knowledge, as well as guidance or help with one's personal life. Each journey begins with a theme. If one were looking for guidance on a specific issue, the theme would be linked to that particular issue. It may start with the formation of a phrase or a sentence that is repeated over and over again.

Considerations

● The journey requires an openness to this type of traditional approach and a place of tranquility in one's mind, without external distractions. This state of mind is helpful in introspection and achieving personal insights.

Shiatsu



Background

● Shiatsu is a contemporary therapy with its roots in Chinese traditional medicine. The actual treatment approach and philosophy is similar to acupuncture in its usage of the meridians (energy channels) and tsubo (pressure points) as well as diagnostic methods, but without the use of needles.

Benefits

● Palms, fingers, thumbs and elbows are used to apply a comfortable amount of pressure to the acupuncture channels to relieve pain and stress as well as to strengthen the body and normalize its functions. It works on the flow of energy (Qi) that circulates through our bodies along specific energy meridians. Shiatsu also triggers the body's inherent ability to repair and regenerate itself in order to regain homeostatic balance.

Considerations

Shiatsu is traditionally performed on a futon mat on the floor. In shiatsu, the receiver remains clothed for the treatment and no oil is used for the massage.

References

Ohashi Touch for Peace

Instructions for Receiving Shiatsu

The person giving Shiatsu is called the 'Giver'; the person receiving is called the 'Receiver'. In shiatsu, there are no machines, oils or equipment: only the use of fingers, hands, elbows and knees and you do not have to remove your clothing. Here are some do's and don'ts for the Receiver:

Do's

1. It is best to take a bath or shower before Shiatsu and wait at least half an hour before you begin.
2. Wear loose clothing so that you are comfortable and socks so your feet stay warm. (sweat suit, t-shirt, etc.)
3. You must remember to breathe in a relaxed and regular pattern. We only apply pressure on the exhalation of your breath.
4. Always tell the Giver if you are uncomfortable or if something or somewhere hurts. Shiatsu must be a pleasant experience. Although there are some parts of the body where it might hurt, the pain should not be unbearable.

Dont's

1. Do not take Shiatsu when you are hungry or full. If you are hungry, eat something. If you are full, wait at least 2 hours.
2. Do not take Shiatsu if you have a broken or fractured bone. If you have any medical conditions that relate to the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver: or if you have the flu, measles, etc., let the Giver know. You should consult with your medical doctor prior to treatment if you have any medical considerations.

Otherwise, enjoy Shiatsu!

Sound Therapy/Sound Healing



Background

● Sound Healing, through various techniques and technologies, is the educated and conscious use of the energy of sound to reach identified goals and promote wellness in the human system – including the expansion of consciousness. Sound Healing is founded on the premise that all matter is vibrating at specific frequencies. Science has proven that sound, or vibration, has a strong impact upon substance. Many ancient civilizations and modern indigenous cultures have used sound to heal and access higher levels of consciousness for thousands of years.

Benefits

● There is a wide range of techniques that utilize sound as a tool for change. Chanting, toning and overtone singing are uses of sound for meditation and relaxation. The use of nature sounds and natural instruments, such as crystal bowls and tuning forks, have specific healing frequencies and harmonics. Shamanic drumming can take people into altered states of consciousness. Sound is now being used by clinical psychologists to help children with certain learning disabilities.

Sound is used to alter brainwave states to help people with sleep disorders and facilitate creative expression. Listening to one's own root frequency enables an individual to create a more centered and grounded awareness within their life. Sound and music are used to help with difficult life transitions, including birth and death. The medical community also uses sound and music in a variety of applications such as during surgery to relieve pain, to break up gallstones and to relax muscles using ultrasound.



Support Groups/Sib Shops



Background

● Support groups use the shared experience of members, along with professional facilitation, to promote understanding, openness and healing. The help provided in support groups may include providing and evaluating relevant information, relating personal experiences, listening to and accepting others' experiences, providing sympathetic understanding and establishing networks of support and community.

Sibling workshops (sib shops) are a type of support group geared towards siblings of children with special medical needs and their specific concerns within a family.

Benefits

● Support groups are generally small, and the information shared is kept very private. Benefits of support groups include an emotional connection outside of friends and family, sharing coping mechanisms, the opportunity to release powerful emotions and a decrease in psychological distress. Sib Shops provide siblings with the opportunity to express concerns about their family members' well being, feelings of exclusion, and other issues commonly faced in a nonjudgmental community of peers.

Tai Chi




Background

☉ Tai chi (pronounced tie-CHEE) is sometimes described as "meditation in motion" because it promotes serenity through gentle movements — connecting the mind and body. Originally developed in ancient China for self-defense, tai chi evolved into a graceful form of exercise that's now used for stress reduction and can help with a variety of other health conditions. To do tai chi, one performs a series of postures or movements in a slow, graceful manner. Each posture flows into the next without pause, ensuring that your body is in constant motion.

Benefits

☉ Some forms of tai chi are more fast-paced and exerting than others but most are gentle and suitable everyone, no matter age or physical ability. Tai chi is low impact, inexpensive, requires no special equipment and can be done indoors or out, alone or in a group. Researchers have found that intensive tai chi practice shows favorable effects on many chronic conditions such as fibromyalgia, Parkinson's, Alzheimers's and MS. Current studies show that regular tai chi may increase psychological well-being including reduction of stress, anxiety, and depression, and enhanced mood in healthy patients and patients with chronic conditions.



In addition to stress reduction, it may promote balance control, cardiovascular fitness, help to lower high blood pressure, reduce pain and sleeplessness.

Considerations

● Although tai chi is generally safe, consider talking with your doctor before starting a new program, particularly if you have problems with your spine, joints or heart, if you are pregnant, have any fractures, or have severe osteoporosis. Tai chi movements can be learned on-line, through video recordings, or in tai chi classes.

2 Mayo Clinic



Thai Massage



Background

● Thai massage is an energizing and rigorous form of massage. Thai massage is also called Thai yoga massage, because the therapist uses his or her hands, knees, legs, and feet to move the patient into a series of yoga-like stretches. Many people say Thai massage feels similar to doing yoga without as much physical exertion. Muscle compression, joint mobilization, and acupressure may also be used during treatment.

Benefits

● Thai massage can assist in relaxation, stress reduction, circulation, energy, flexibility, range of motion and a general focus of the mind and body.

Considerations

● Thai massage is generally performed on a mat on the floor, though some therapists may practice Table Thai Massage. The client wears comfortable clothing that allows easy movement. No oils are used in Thai massage. Sessions may last two hours or more and include rhythmic pressing and stretching of the entire body; this may include pulling fingers and toes, ears, and cracking knuckles.

Yoga














Background

● The word yoga is Sanskrit and means to "yoke," or unite, the mind, body, and spirit. Yoga is best known as a set of physical practices that include gentle stretches, breathing practices, and progressive deep relaxation. These physical practices are intended to ready the body and mind for meditation as well as for a meditative perspective on life. The physical part of the yoga lifestyle is called hatha yoga. Hatha yoga focuses on asanas, or poses. A person who practices yoga goes through a series of specific poses while controlling his or her breathing. There are many different types of yoga that can be studied.

Benefits

● Yoga has many potential benefits. It can improve flexibility, strength, balance, and stamina. In addition, it can reduce anxiety and stress, improve mental clarity, and improve sleep. Practice and study of yoga can help to bring about a natural balance of body and mind in which the state of health can manifest. While yoga can be beneficial and satisfying as a physical therapy alone, to many, yoga becomes a philosophy that offers instruction and insight into every aspect of life: the spiritual, the mental, and the physical.

Surya Namaskara A
Sun Salutation A

 Tadasana	 Utthitta Tadasana	 Uttanasana	 Ardha Uttanasana
 Chaturanga Dandasana	 Urdhva Mukha Svanasana	 Adho Mukha Svanasana	 Ardha Uttanasana
 Uttanasana	 Utthitta Tadasana	 Tadasana	

Zero Balancing



Background

● Developed by Fritz Smith, MD in the early 1970's, Zero Balancing is a powerful body-mind therapy that uses skilled touch to address the relationship between energy and structures of the body. Following a protocol that typically lasts 30 to 45 minutes, the practitioner uses finger pressure and gentle traction on areas of tension in the bones, joints and soft tissue to create fulcrums, or points of balance, around which the body can relax and reorganize. Zero Balancing focuses primarily on key joints of our skeleton that conduct and balance forces of gravity, posture and movement.

Benefits

● By addressing the deepest and densest tissues of the body along with soft tissue and energy fields, Zero Balancing helps to clear blocks in the body's energy flow, amplify vitality and contribute to better postural alignment. A Zero Balancing session is designed to leave the patient with a wonderful feeling of inner harmony and organization.



It can help relieve body aches and pain, release restrictions in movement, and provide lasting relief from emotional distress to improve overall quality of life. Zero Balancing can also be helpful with specific goals such as improving concentration or sleep, releasing unwanted stress, eliminating old behavior patterns, or to boost well being.

Considerations

● During a session, clients remain fully clothed. The practitioner assesses the body for tension and applies gentle finger pressure or traction into areas around the spine, ribs, hips, feet and neck to support the body and allow change. A typical session lasts 30-45 minutes.

Resources

<http://www.zerobalancing.com/>

