

Arthritis Relief

Chinese Qigong for
Healing and Prevention

氣功防治關節炎

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming



**3rd
Edition**

QIGONG—HEALTH AND HEALING

Healthy joints are vital to pain free movement.

QIGONG EXERCISES CAN HELP HEAL AND PREVENT ARTHRITIS.

“Current pharmacological treatments for arthritis are effective to various degrees in controlling the symptoms, but with great drawbacks, including potential toxicity, cost, and potential detrimental effects on both mood and immune function. An effective non-pharmacological therapy for arthritis that returns control to the patients without side effect would have a major impact on arthritis treatment. Qigong therapy from Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) shows promise in this direction.” — **World Institute for Self Healing** www.wishus.org

“One of America’s most sought-after Instructors of Qigong” — **Omega Institute**

“Yang, Jwing-Ming is indeed a master when describing the extensive Chinese concept of Qi.” — **Perry A. Chapdelaine, Sr. Author and Executive Director of The Arthritis Foundation**

“Dr. Yang merits the highest praise for his efforts to meld eastern and western medical understanding in the hopes of achieving greater synergy between the two.”
— **Thomas G. Gutheil, M.D. Professor of Psychiatry Harvard Medical School**

Young or old, sedentary or athletic; it is likely that 1 out of 7 of us will be afflicted with Arthritis in our lifetime. Since healthy joints are key to pain-free movement, rejuvenating them is vital to well-being.

Although western medicine has made great progress in treating Arthritis, it has limited success in actually healing it; rather focusing more on relieving pain and inflammation.

Chinese medicine, over the last four thousand years, has developed many of its own methods to treat Arthritis, including Qigong exercises, acupuncture, massage, and herbal treatments. By doing Qigong exercises, you can effectively treat many types of Arthritis and rebuild the strength of your joints, which is the root of complete healing.

This book introduces Qigong exercises that have been successfully used in China to treat Arthritis. It begins with general concepts of Qigong, a summary of Arthritis according to both western and eastern medicine, an explanation of how Qigong treats Arthritis, and finally gentle Qigong exercises you can use to help prevent, treat and heal Arthritis.



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Contents

About the Author	ix
Foreword by Dr. Thomas G. Gutheil	xv
Foreword by Perry A. Chapdelaine, Sr.	xvii
Preface (Old Edition)	xix
Preface (New Edition)	xxi
Romanization of Chinese Words	xxiii
Acknowledgements	xxv
Chapter 1. About Chinese Qigong 中國氣功介紹	
1-1. Introduction 介紹	1
1-2. Qi, Qigong, and Man 氣、氣功與人之關係	2
1-3. The History of Qigong 氣功簡史	26
1-4. Categories of Qigong 氣功之分類	31
1-5. Qigong Training Theory 氣功練習之理論	42
1-6. How to Use This Book 讀此書之態度	61
Chapter 2. What is Arthritis? 何謂關節炎？	
2-1. What is Arthritis? 何謂關節炎？	65
2-2. The Structure of Joints 關節的結構	68
2-3. The Different Forms of Arthritis and Related Disorders 不同形式的關節炎與有關的病症	69
2-4. Causes of Arthritis 關節炎的起因	79
2-5. Other Possible Means of Preventing or Curing Arthritis 其他可能防止關節炎的方法	81
Chapter 3. How do the Chinese Treat Arthritis? 中國如何治療關節炎	
3-1. General Chinese Treatments for Arthritis 中國一般治療關節炎之方法	85
3-2. How Can Qigong Cure Arthritis? 氣功如何治療關節炎	90
Chapter 4. Qigong for Arthritis 氣功治療關節炎	
4-1. Introduction 介紹	99
4-2. Qigong for Strengthening the Internal Organs 氣功強健內臟	101
4-3. Massage and Cavity Press (Acupressure) 點穴按摩	114
4-4. Qigong Exercises for Arthritis 治療關節炎之氣功運動	134
Chapter 5. Conclusion 結論	161
Appendix A. Translation and Glossary of Chinese Terms 中文術語之翻譯與解釋	163
Index 索引	181

About Chinese Qigong

中國氣功介紹

1-1. INTRODUCTION 介紹

Young and old, rich and poor, all have experienced the pain of arthritis. Because it is so prevalent, almost all cultures have developed ways of alleviating the pain or even curing the condition.

Generally speaking, younger people get arthritis less frequently than the elderly because their bodies are in better condition, and they are more active. Experience has also shown that, once younger people do develop arthritis, they recover more easily. Poor people have tended to get arthritis less frequently than wealthier people, because they engage in more manual labor. This seems to indicate that people who exercise regularly have a better chance of staying healthy and free from arthritis.

As in other cultures, the Chinese also suffer both physically and mentally from arthritis. Many methods of healing and prevention have been developed within the tradition of Chinese medicine.

The most fundamental principle of Chinese medicine is the concept of Qi (氣) (pronounced “Chee,” known today in the West as bioelectricity). Illnesses are diagnosed by evaluating the condition of the body’s Qi and interpreting the visible physical symptoms. According to Chinese medicine, when the Qi and its supply start to become unbalanced, the physical body is affected and begins to be damaged. This can happen both if the body is too Yin (陰) (deficient in Qi) or too Yang (陽) (with an excess of Qi). When Chinese physicians diagnose any disease or condition, they explore how and where the Qi is unbalanced. Once the Qi imbalance is corrected and the Qi returned to its normal level, the root cause of the illness has been removed.

Acupuncture is a common method for adjusting the Qi and preventing further physical damage. The Qi level can also be raised or lowered to stimulate the repair of the damage.

Applying Qi theory to arthritis can clear up many mysteries that cannot be explained by Western medicine. For example, almost all Western studies have denied that arthritis is significantly affected by the weather, despite the insistence of many arthritis sufferers. However, if we accept the fact that our bodies have a bioelectric field, it should be obvious

that it would be affected by a strong natural electric field such as that found in thunderclouds. In fact, this external natural electric field can also disturb our emotions, because they are also affected by Qi imbalances in our body. The West has recently discovered that our internal bioelectric field can be disturbed by the electromagnetic field generated by high tension wires, and that this may cause cancer.

In China, acupuncture is not the only method used to correct the Qi imbalance that causes arthritis. Massage, cavity press (acupressure), and certain Qigong (氣功) (pronounced “Chee Gong”) exercises are also used. Most of these methods were created by medical doctors, but some were also created by masters of the Qigong systems used by martial artists. This is not as odd as it would at first seem. Since joint injuries are common among martial artists, many of these injuries would have developed into arthritis, a dangerous condition in a time when martial arts were used in deadly earnest. Many of the masters were experienced in Qigong and in elements of medicine, especially in the treatment of injuries, much like our modern sports medicine specialists. It would therefore be natural for them to find ways treat a common condition like arthritis. Most people in the West are familiar with the slow, relaxed movements of Taijiquan (太極拳) (or Tai Chi Chuan). In China, this art is well known for its ability to rebuild the strength of the joints and alleviate the causes of arthritis.

While Western medicine has developed according to the principle of diagnosing visible symptoms and curing visible physical damage, Chinese medicine may be more advanced in that it deals with the body's Qi. On the other hand, Chinese medicine is still far behind Western medicine in the study of and research on the physical aspect of the human body. This can be seen in Western scientific methods and in the technology the West has developed. Because of the differences between the two systems of medicine, there are still large gaps in mankind's understanding of the body. I believe that if both medical cultures can learn and borrow from each other, these remaining gaps can soon be filled, and medicine as a whole will be able to take a giant step forward.

The ease of communication and the increased friendship among many different cultures during the last two decades has given mankind an unprecedented opportunity to share such things as medical concepts. We should all take advantage of this and open our minds to the knowledge and experiences of other peoples. I sincerely hope that this takes place, especially in the field of medicine. This goal has been my motivation in writing this book. Because of my limited knowledge, I can only offer this little volume. I hope that it generates widening ripples of interest in sharing and exchanging with other cultures.

1-2. QI, QIGONG, AND MAN 氣、氣功與人之關係

Before we discuss the relationship of Qi to the human body, we should first define Qi and Qigong. We will first discuss the general concept of Qi, including both the traditional understanding and the possible modern scientific paradigms, which allows us to

use modern concepts to explain Qigong. If you would like to investigate these subjects in more detail, please refer to the YMAA book: *The Root of Chinese Qigong*.

A General Definition of Qi 氣的廣義

Qi is the energy or natural force that fills the universe. The Chinese have traditionally believed that there are three major powers in the universe. These Three Powers (San Cai, 三才) are Heaven (Tian, 天), Earth (Di, 地), and Man (Ren, 人) (alternatively translated as “Humanity”). Heaven (the sky or universe) has Heaven Qi (Tian Qi), the most important of the three, that is made up of the forces which the heavenly bodies exert on the earth, such as sunshine, moonlight, gravity, and the energy from the stars. In ancient times, the Chinese believed that weather, climate, and natural disasters were governed by Heaven Qi. Chinese people still refer to the weather as Heaven Qi (Tian Qi, 天氣). Every energy field strives to stay in balance, so whenever the Heaven Qi loses its balance, it tries to rebalance itself. Then the wind must blow, rain must fall, even tornadoes or hurricanes must happen in order for the Heaven Qi to reach a new energy balance.

Under Heaven Qi, is Earth Qi (Di Qi, 地氣). It is influenced and controlled by Heaven Qi. For example, too much rain will force a river to flood or change its path. Without rain, the plants will die. The Chinese believe that Earth Qi is made up of lines and patterns of energy, as well as the earth’s magnetic field and the heat concealed underground. These energies must also balance, otherwise disasters such as earthquakes will occur. When the Qi of the earth is balanced, plants will grow and animals thrive.

Finally, within the Earth Qi, each individual person, animal, and plant has its own Qi field, which always seeks to be balanced. When any individual being loses its Qi balance, it will sicken, die, and decompose. All natural things, including mankind and our Human Qi, grow within and are influenced by the natural cycles of Heaven Qi and Earth Qi. Throughout the history of Qigong, people have been most interested in Human Qi (Ren Qi, 人氣) and its relationship with Heaven Qi and Earth Qi.

In China, Qi is defined as any type of energy that is able to demonstrate power and strength. This energy can be electricity, magnetic, heat, or light. For examples, electric power is called “Electric Qi” (Dian Qi, 電氣), and heat is called “Heat Qi” (Re Qi, 熱氣). When a person is alive, his body’s energy is called “Human Qi” (Ren Qi, 人氣).

Qi is also commonly used to express the energy state of something, especially living things. As mentioned before, the weather is called “Heaven Qi” (Tian Qi, 天氣) because it indicates the energy state of the heavens. When something is alive it has “Vital Qi” (Huo Qi, 活氣), and when it is dead it has “Dead Qi” (Si Qi, 死氣) or “Ghost Qi” (Gui Qi, 鬼氣). When a person is righteous and has the spiritual strength to do good, he is said to have “Normal Qi or Righteous Qi” (Zheng Qi, 正氣). The spiritual state or morale of an army is called “Energy state” (Qi Shi, 氣勢).

You can see that the word “Qi” has a wider and more general definition than most people think. It does not only refer to the energy circulating in the human body.

in the past that is hidden behind your mask will emerge and bother you. Normally, the first step of the regulating process is to stop new fantasies and images. Then, you must deal with your conscious mind. That means you must learn how to remove the mask from your face. Only then will you see yourself clearly. Therefore, the first step is to know yourself. Next, you must learn how to handle the problem instead of continuing to avoid it.

There are many ways of regulating your mind. However, the most important key to success is to use your wisdom mind to analyze the situation and find the solution. Do not let your emotional mind govern your thinking. Here, I would like to share with you a few stories about regulating the mind. Hopefully these stories can provide you with a guideline for your own regulation.

In China many centuries ago, two monks were walking side by side down a muddy road when they came upon a large puddle that completely blocked the road. A very beautiful lady in a lovely gown stood at the edge of the puddle, unable to go further without spoiling her clothes.

Without hesitation, one of the monks picked her up and carried her across the puddle, set her down on the other side, and continued on his way. Many hours later when the two monks were preparing to camp for the night, the second monk turned to the first and said, "I can no longer hold this back, I'm quite angry at you! We are not supposed to look at women, particularly pretty ones, never mind touch them. Why did you do that?" The first monk replied, "Brother, I left the woman at the mud puddle; why are you still carrying her?"

From this story, you can see that often, the thought that bothers you is created by nobody but yourself. If you can use your wisdom mind to govern yourself, many times you can set your mind free from emotional bondage regardless of the situation.

It is true that frequently the mind bothers or enslaves you to the desire for material enjoyment or money. From this desire, you misunderstand the meaning of life. A really happy life comes from satisfaction of both material and spiritual needs.

Have you ever thought about what the real meaning of your life is? What is the real goal for your life? Are you enslaved by money, power, or love? What will make you truly happy?

I remember a story one of my professors at Taiwan University told me: "There was a jail with a prisoner in it," he said, "who was surrounded by mountains of money. He kept counting the money and feeling so happy about his life, thinking that he was the richest man in the whole world. A man passing by saw him and said through the tiny window: 'Why are you so happy, you are in prison?' Do you know that? The prisoner laughed: "No! No! It is not that I am inside the jail, it is that you are outside of the jail!"

How do you feel about this story? Do you want to be a prisoner and a slave to money, or do you want to be the real you and feel free internally? Think and be happy.

There is another story which was told to me by one of my students. Ever since I heard this story, it has always offered me a new guideline for my life. This new guideline

What is Arthritis?

何謂關節炎？

In this chapter, we will first describe arthritis from the point of view of both Western medicine and Chinese medicine. In the second section, we will review the structure of joints so that you will more easily understand our discussion of the different forms of arthritis in the third section. In the fourth section we will briefly consider the possible causes of arthritis. Finally, in the fifth section we will review other means of preventing or curing arthritis.

2-1. WHAT IS ARTHRITIS? 何謂關節炎？

Although both the Western and the Chinese systems of medicine describe arthritis in very similar ways, especially in regards to symptoms, there are a number of differences in how the two cultures approach the disease.

The Western Viewpoints About Arthritis 西方對關節炎之看法

Before discussing arthritis, we would first like to mention another popular, non-medical term, rheumatism, which is commonly confused with arthritis. Rheumatism has come to mean so many things to so many people that it is almost impossible to give it a clear definition. The term rheumatism commonly refers to any of several pathological conditions of the muscles, tendons, joints, bones, or nerves, characterized by discomfort and disability. This includes variable, shifting, painful inflammation and stiffness of the muscles, joints, or other structures.

The term arthritis is also commonly misused to refer to any vague pain in the area of the joints. However, joints are complicated mechanisms made up of ligaments, tendons, muscles, cartilage, and bursae, and pain in them can have many different causes. Arthritis is specifically an inflammation of the joints. The word arthritis is derived from the Greek words *arthron* (joint) and *itis* (inflammation). Therefore, if you have pain or swelling caused by injury to the ligaments or muscles, it is not necessarily classified as arthritis. You can see that while arthritis is (in a popular sense) a form of rheumatism, rheumatism is not necessarily arthritis.

The symptoms or characteristics of arthritis are pain, swelling, redness, heat, stiffness, and deformity in one or more joints. Arthritis may appear suddenly or gradually,

and it may feel different to different people. Some patients feel a sharp, burning, or grinding pain, while others may feel a pain like a toothache. The same person may feel it at some times as pain, and at other times as stiffness. If we look more closely at these signs we can detect certain characteristic physiological changes. These changes include dilation of the blood vessels in the affected area and an increase of blood flow at the site of inflammation. In addition, there is increased permeability in these vessels, as white blood cells, that fight infection, infiltrate the diseased tissue. Finally, fluid from the blood can also leak into the tissue and generate edema or swelling. For these reasons, arthritis may affect not only the joints, but also other connective tissues of the body. These tissues include several supporting structures such as muscles, tendons, and ligaments, and the protective coverings of some internal organs.

Depending on where and how the problem started, and on what pathologic process is operating, arthritis can be classified into different forms such as gout, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and many others. We will discuss these in the third section.

The Chinese Viewpoints About Arthritis 中國對關節炎之看法

Although the symptoms of arthritis remain the same everywhere, the Chinese physicians consider them from a different point of view. Like all other cases of illness, Chinese physicians diagnose by evaluating the imbalance of Qi (which the West now calls bioelectricity) in the body, as well as by considering the actual physical symptoms.

Chinese medicine has found that, before a physical illness occurs, the Qi becomes unbalanced. If this Qi imbalance is not corrected, the physical body can be damaged and the physical symptoms of sickness will appear. The reason for this is very simple. Every cell in your body is alive, and in order to stay alive and functioning, each requires a constant supply of Qi. Whenever the supply of Qi to the cells becomes irregular (or the Qi “loses its balance”), the cells start to malfunction. Chinese physicians try to intercept the problem before there is any actual physical damage, and correct the situation with acupuncture, herbal treatments, or a number of other methods. In this way they hope to prevent physical damage, which is considered the worst stage of an illness. Once the physical body, for example an internal organ, has been damaged, it is almost impossible to make a complete recovery. This approach is the root of Chinese medicine.

Chinese physicians try to diagnose arthritis in its earliest stages, before there is any physical damage. When the Qi starts to become unbalanced, although there are no physical changes, the patient suffers from nerve pain. Because human Qi is strongly affected by the natural Qi present in clouds, moisture, and the sun (both day and night), the body's Qi is easily disturbed by changes in the weather, and arthritis patients will usually feel pain in the joints. When cloud cover is low and there is a lot of moisture in the air, the potential of the earth's electromagnetic field is also increased, and your body's Qi balance can be significantly influenced. The other obvious symptom of this influence is emotional disturbance. In the West, as long as there is no symptom of physical damage, these feelings of physical and emotional pain are usually ignored, although some-

How do the Chinese Treat Arthritis? 中國如何治療關節炎

In the first chapter we said that the actual definition of Qigong is the study of Qi. This means that Qigong actually covers a very wide field of research, and includes the study of the three general types of Qi (Heaven Qi, Earth Qi, and Human Qi) and their interrelationships. However, because the Chinese have traditionally paid more attention to the study of Human Qi, which is concerned with health and longevity, the term “Qigong” has often been misunderstood and misused to mean only the study of Human Qi. Because so much attention has been given to Human Qi over thousands of years, the study of human Qigong has reached a very high level. Today it includes many fields such as acupuncture, herbal study, massage, cavity press, Qigong exercises, and even martial arts.

In this chapter I would like to summarize, according to my understanding, some of the methods commonly used in China to prevent arthritis, to ease its pain, and to cure it. I would then like to focus the discussion on how Qigong uses massage (including cavity press) and exercises to prevent and cure arthritis. Finally, I would like to point out the differences in how Western and Chinese medicine use massage and exercise to treat arthritis.

3-1. GENERAL CHINESE TREATMENTS FOR ARTHRITIS

中國一般治療關節炎之方法

The best way to treat arthritis is to prevent it from happening. However, if it has already occurred, then the appropriate course is to prevent it from getting any worse, and then to rebuild the strength of the joint so that it can resume functioning normally.

Generally speaking, if a case of arthritis has already reached the stage of serious physical damage, special treating is needed before any rebuilding can proceed. During the treating and rebuilding process, alleviating pain is always the first concern. In this section we will briefly discuss the theory behind several common methods for treating arthritis that have been developed in China.

1. Massage: 按摩

When done properly, massage will improve the Qi circulation in the joint area. Massage is commonly used when a patient suffers from Feng Shi (風濕) before arthritis and physical damage have occurred. At this time the Qi circulation is unbalanced, which may affect the nerves around the joints and cause pain. As mentioned earlier, Feng Shi can occur when a joint is weak or injured, or when a joint has degenerated because of aging. The pain usually increases when rain is coming on, because clouds and moisture accumulate great masses of electric charges that affect the Qi in our bodies. Pain can also occur when the joints are exposed to cold wind, which can significantly affect the Qi of the joints.

If the Feng Shi is caused by a minor injury, massage can help to heal the injury and ease the pain. The massage can usually prevent the Feng Shi from developing into arthritis, which the Chinese call “joint infection” (Guan Jie Yan, 關節炎). However, if the Feng Shi is caused by a weak joint or one degenerated because of aging, then once the pain is alleviated, Qigong exercises are necessary to rebuild the strength of the joint and prevent the Feng Shi from returning and developing into arthritis.

Massage is not used just to heal Feng Shi. It is very effective in increasing Qi circulation and easing the pain even when the joint infection (arthritis) has already become serious. However, because massage cannot reach deep enough into the body, it is not wise to rely on it for a cure.

2. Acupuncture: 針灸

Acupuncture is another method of temporarily stopping the pain and can increase the Qi circulation in the joint area to help its healing. The main difference between massage and acupuncture is that the former usually stays only on the surface, while the latter can reach to the center of the joint. One of the advantages of acupuncture is that, if the arthritis is caused by an old injury deep in the joint, it can heal the injury or at least remove some of the stagnated Qi or bruise.

In acupuncture, needles, or other newly developed means such as lasers or electricity are used to stimulate and increase the Qi circulation. Although acupuncture can stop the pain and can, to some degree, cure the arthritis, the process can be so time-consuming as to be emotionally draining. Acupuncture is an external method, and while it may remove the symptoms, it can usually heal arthritis only temporarily or only to a limited degree. Rebuilding the strength of the joint is a long-term proposition. Therefore, after arthritis patients have received some treatment, the physician will frequently encourage them to get involved in Qigong exercises to rebuild the joint.

3. Herbal Treatments: 藥療

Herbal treatments are used together with massage and acupuncture, especially when the arthritis is caused by an injury. The herbs are usually made into a paste or ground into powder, mixed with a liquid such as alcohol, and then applied to the joint. The dressing is changed every twenty-four hours.

Qigong for Arthritis

氣功治療關節炎

4-1. INTRODUCTION 介紹

Before proceeding any further, we would like first to discuss the attitude which you need to adopt in your practice. Quite frequently, people who are ill are reluctant to become involved in the healing process. This is especially true for arthritis patients. Both Western and Chinese physicians have had difficulty persuading them to become involved in regular exercise or Qigong. The main reason for this reluctance is that the patients are afraid of pain, and therefore believe that these kinds of exercise are harmful. In order to conquer this obstacle to your healing, you must understand the theory of healing and the reason for practicing. Only then will you have the confidence necessary for continued practice. Remember, a physician may have an excellent prescription for your illness, but if you don't take the medicine, it won't do you any good.

Another factor that has caused the failure of many a potential cure is lack of persistence. Because the healing process is very slow, it is very easy to become impatient and lazy. Very often in life we will know exactly what it is that we need to do, but because we are controlled by the emotional parts of our minds, we end up either not doing what we need to, or not doing it right. Either way, our efforts will have all been in vain.

It seems that most of the time our “emotional mind” and “wisdom mind” are in opposition. In China there is a proverb which says: “You are your own biggest enemy.” This means that your emotional mind often wants to go in the opposite direction from what your wisdom mind knows is best. If your wisdom mind is able to overcome your emotional mind, then there is nothing that can stop you from doing anything you want. Usually, however, your emotional mind causes you to lose your willpower and perseverance. We always know that our clear-headed wisdom mind understands what needs to be done, but too often we surrender to our emotional mind and become slaves of our emotions.

The first step when you decide to practice Qigong is to strengthen your wisdom mind and use it to govern your emotional mind. Only then will you have enough patience and perseverance to keep practicing. You can see that the first key to successful training is not the techniques themselves, but rather your self-control. I sincerely believe

that as long as you have a strong will, patience, and perseverance, there is nothing that you can't accomplish.

Forming the habit of practicing regularly actually represents changing your lifestyle. Once you have started regulating your life through Qigong, not only can it cure your arthritis and restrengthen your joints, but it can also keep you healthy and make both your mental and physical lives much happier.

This chapter will focus on discussing the Qigong practices I am familiar with, leaving other methods, such as acupuncture and herbs to other references. Before we discuss the actual practices, we would first like to remind you of the keys to successful practice. Only if you follow these keys in your practice will you be able to see and feel how Chinese Qigong is different from similar Western arthritis exercises.

Important Training Keys: 練習重點

1. Regulating the Body: 調身

Before you start your Qigong exercises, you should first calm down your mind and use this mind to bring your body into a calm and relaxed state. Naturally, you should always be concerned with your mental and physical centers. Only then will you be able to find your balance. When you have achieved both mental and physical relaxation, centering, and balance, you will be both natural and comfortable. This is the key to regulating your body.

When you relax, you should learn to relax deeply into your internal organs, and especially the muscles that enclose the organs. In addition, you must also place your mind on the joints that are giving you trouble. The more you can bring your mind deep into the joint and relax it, the more Qi will circulate smoothly and freely to repair the damage.

2. Regulating the Breathing: 調息

As mentioned before, breathing is the central strategy in Qigong practice. According to Qigong theory, when you inhale you lead Qi inward and when you exhale you lead Qi outward. This is our natural instinct. For example, when you feel cold in the winter-time, in order to keep from letting the Qi out of your body, you naturally inhale more than you exhale to lead the Qi inward, which also closes the pores in the skin. However, in the summertime when you are too hot you naturally exhale more than inhale in order to lead Qi out of your body. When you do this you start to sweat and the pores open.

In Qigong, you want to lead the Qi to the internal organs and bone marrow, so you must learn how to use inhalation to lead the Qi inward. When you use Qigong to cure your arthritis, you must inhale and exhale deeply and calmly so that you can lead the Qi deep into the joint and also outward to dissipate the excess or stagnant Qi that has accumulated in the joints. Therefore, in addition to relaxing when you practice, you should always remember to inhale and exhale deeply. When you inhale, place your mind deep in the joint, and when you exhale, lead the Qi to the surface of the skin.

3. *Regulating the Mind*: 調心

In Qigong, the mind is considered the general who directs the battle against sickness. After all, it is your mind that manages all of your thinking and activity. Therefore, a clear, calm mind is very important so that you can judge clearly and accurately. In addition, your attention must also be concentrated. Your mind can generate an EMF (an electromotive force or “voltage”) that causes your Qi to circulate. The more you concentrate, the more strongly you can lead the Qi.

When you have a calm and concentrated mind, you will be able to feel and sense the problem correctly. Therefore, when you practice Qigong for your arthritis, you must learn how to bring your mind inward so that you can understand the situation, and you must know how to use your concentrated attention to lead the Qi.

4. *Regulating the Qi*: 調氣

Once you have regulated your body, breathing, and mind, you will be in a good position to start regulating your Qi, and will be able to lead your Qi anywhere in your body in order to make repairs.

5. *Regulating the Spirit*: 調神

The final key to Qigong is raising your spirit of vitality. Good morale or fighting spirit is necessary to win the struggle against illness. When your spirit is high, your willpower is strong, your mind is firm, and your patience can last a long time. In addition, when your spirit is high your emotions are under control and your wisdom mind can stimulate the Qi to circulate in the body more efficiently. This will significantly reduce the time of healing.

You should now have a clear idea of how to practice most efficiently. During the course of your practice, you should frequently remind yourself of these key requirements. If you would like to learn more about the keys to Qigong practice, you may refer to the YMAA book: *The Root of Chinese Qigong*. In the next section we will introduce several Qigong exercises that can be used to strengthen and maintain the health of the internal organs. The third section will discuss Qigong massage and cavity press for arthritis. Finally, the fourth section will introduce many Qigong exercises that can rebuild the strength of the joints.

4-2. QIGONG FOR STRENGTHENING THE INTERNAL ORGANS 氣功強健內臟

Your internal organs are the foundation of your health. Most deaths are due to the malfunction or failure of the internal organs. In order to be healthy and avoid degeneration, your organs need to have the correct amount of Qi circulating smoothly through them.

The internal organs manage the energy in our bodies, and carry out a variety of physical processes. When any organ starts to malfunction, the Qi circulation in the body

will be disrupted, and the production of hormones will be affected. This state can result in a variety of disorders, including gouty arthritis.

In this section, we would like to introduce two types of Qigong practices that are commonly used to improve Qi circulation, especially around the internal organs. The first exercise is massaging the internal organs by moving the muscles inside the torso. If you would like to have more information on the theory behind this subject, please refer to my book *The Eight Simple Qigong Exercises*.

The second type of Qigong practice is improving the Qi circulation around the internal organs by massaging either directly over the organs or on acupuncture cavities that are connected to the organs. If you are interested to know about massage, please refer to my book: *Chinese Qigong Massage*.

Massaging the Internal Organs with Movement 內臟按摩運動

All of the internal organs are surrounded by muscles. Except for some of the trunk muscles that we use constantly throughout the day, most of these muscles are ignored. According to Qigong theory, if you can bring your Yi (意) (wisdom mind) to a muscle, you can lead Qi to energize it and move it. For example, if you decide you want to be able to wiggle your ears and keep trying, you will eventually be able to. It's the same with the internal muscles. This means that, if you practice becoming very calm and bringing your attention deeper and deeper into the center of your body, you will soon be able to feel and sense the structure and condition of the insides of your body. Once this happens you can use your mind to move the internal muscles and massage the internal organs.

The way to reach this goal is to start by using your trunk muscles to make the muscles deeper inside your body move. After you have practiced for a while, your mind will be able to reach deeper and feel other muscles as well. Once you are able to feel these muscles, you will be able to move them. With a bit more practice you will be able to control them while keeping them relaxed, and the movements will become natural, easy, and comfortable. Remember that the muscles have to be relaxed before the organs can be relaxed and before the Qi can circulate smoothly.

In this sub-section, we will introduce the beginning steps of internal organ massage through trunk movement. After you are able to do these exercises easily and smoothly, you should continue to lead your mind deeper and deeper into your body and sense your organs.

It is a good idea to loosen up your trunk before starting these massaging movements. This will let you move more naturally and comfortably.

Loosening the Torso Muscles 人體軀幹的放鬆

The torso is the center of the whole body, and it contains the muscles that control the torso and also surround the internal organs. When the torso muscles are tense, the whole body will be tense and the internal organs will be compressed. This causes stag-

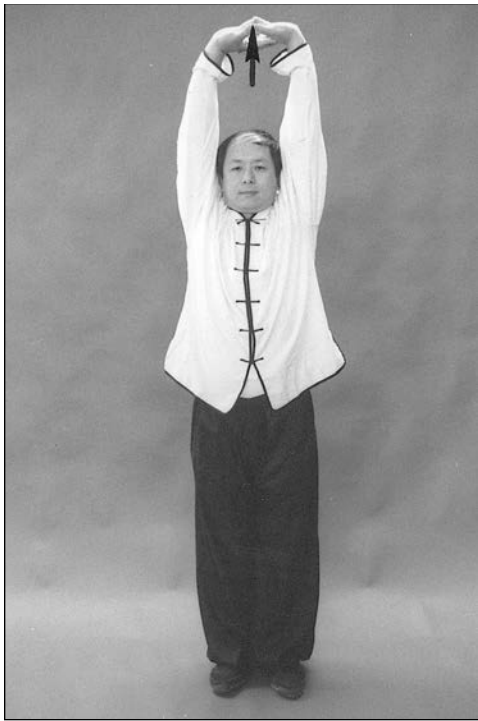


FIGURE 4-1

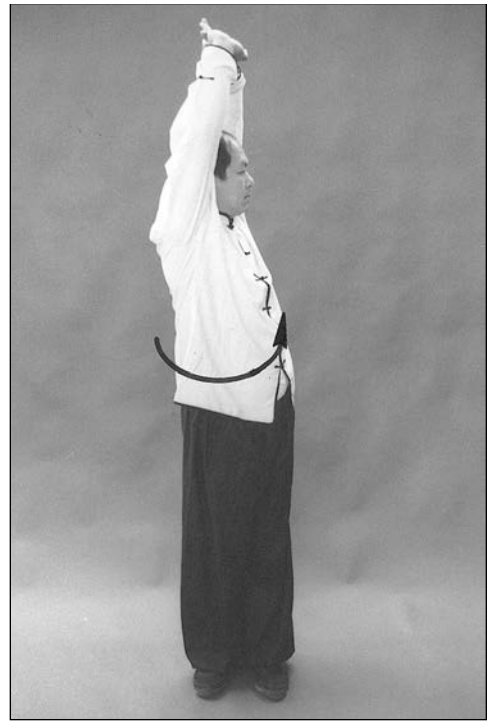


FIGURE 4-2

nation of the Qi circulation in the body and especially in the organs. For this reason, the torso muscles should be stretched and loosened up before any moving Qigong practice.

First, interlock your fingers and lift your hands up over your head while imagining that you are pushing upward with your hands and pushing downward with your feet (Figure 4-1). Do not tense your muscles, because this will constrict your body and prevent you from stretching. If you do this stretch correctly, you will feel the muscles in your waist area tensing slightly because they are being pulled simultaneously from the top and the bottom. Next, use your mind to relax even more, and stretch out a little bit more. After you have stretched for about ten seconds, turn your upper body to one side to twist the trunk muscles (Figure 4-2). Stay to the side for three to five seconds, turn your body to face forward and then turn to the other side. Stay there for three to five seconds. Repeat the upper body twisting three times, then tilt your upper body to the side and stay there for about three seconds (Figure 4-3), then tilt to the other side. Next, bend forward and touch your hands to the floor (Figure 4-4) and stay there for three to five seconds. Finally, squat down with your feet flat on the floor to stretch your ankles (Figure 4-5), and then lift your heels up to stretch the toes (Figure 4-6). Repeat the entire process ten times. After you finish, the inside of your body should feel very comfortable and warm.

The torso is supported by the spine and the trunk muscles. Once you have stretched your trunk muscles, you can loosen up the torso. This also moves the muscles inside your

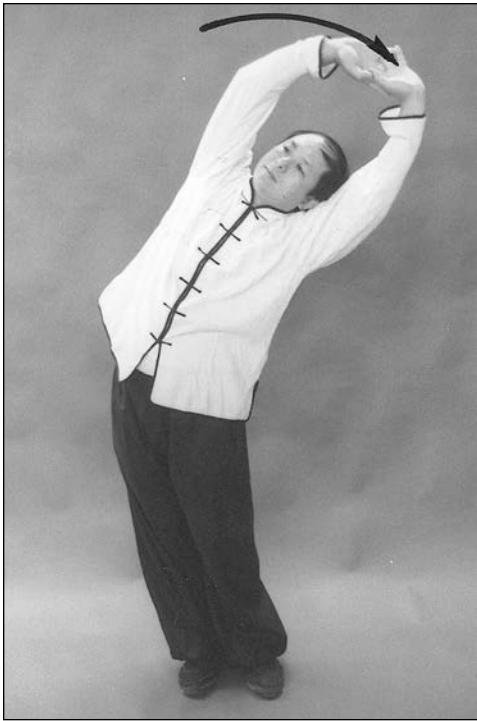


FIGURE 4-3

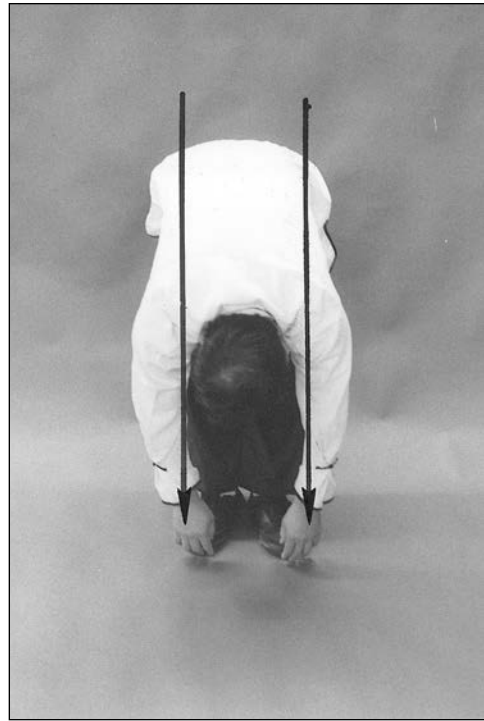


FIGURE 4-4

body around, which moves and relaxes your internal organs. This, in turn, makes it possible for the Qi to circulate smoothly inside your body.

a. Massaging the Large Intestine, Small Intestine, Urinary Bladder, and Kidneys

按摩大腸、小腸、膀胱、與腎臟

This exercise helps you to regain conscious control of the muscles in your abdomen. There are four major benefits to this abdominal exercise. First, when your Lower Dan Tian (Xia Dan Tian, 下丹田) area is loose, the Qi can flow in and out easily. The Lower Dan Tian is the main residence of your Original Qi (Yuan Qi, 元氣). The Qi in your Dan Tian can be led easily only when your abdomen is loose and relaxed. Second, when the abdominal area is loose, the Qi circulation in the large and small intestines will be smooth, and they will be able to absorb nutrients and eliminate waste more efficiently. If your body does not eliminate effectively, the absorption of nutrients will be hindered, and you may become sick. Third, when the abdominal area is loose, the Qi in the kidneys will circulate smoothly and the Original Essence stored there can be converted more efficiently into Qi. In addition, when the kidney area is loose, the kidney Qi can be led downward and upward to nourish the entire body. Fourth, these exercises eliminate Qi stagnation in the lower back, healing and preventing lower back pain.

To practice this exercise, stand with your feet a comfortable distance apart and your knees slightly bent. As you get more used to this exercise and your legs become stronger,



FIGURE 4-5

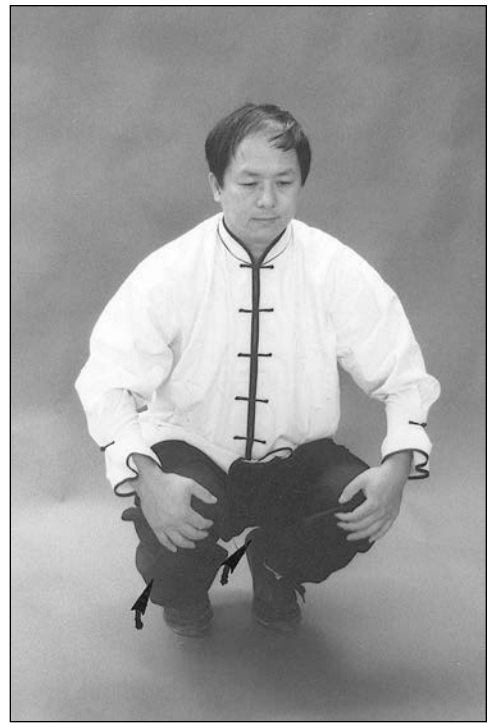


FIGURE 4-6

bend your knees a little bit more. Without moving your thighs or upper body, use the waist muscles to move the abdomen around in a horizontal circle (Figure 4-7). Circle in one direction about ten times, and then in the other direction about ten times. If you hold one hand over your Lower Dan Tian and the other on your sacrum, you may be able to focus your attention better on the area you want to control.

In the beginning you may have difficulty making your body move the way you want it to, but if you keep practicing you will quickly learn how to do it. Once you can do the movement comfortably, make the circles larger and larger. Naturally, this will cause the muscles to tense somewhat and inhibit the Qi flow, but the more you practice the sooner you will be able to relax again. After you have practiced for a while and can control your

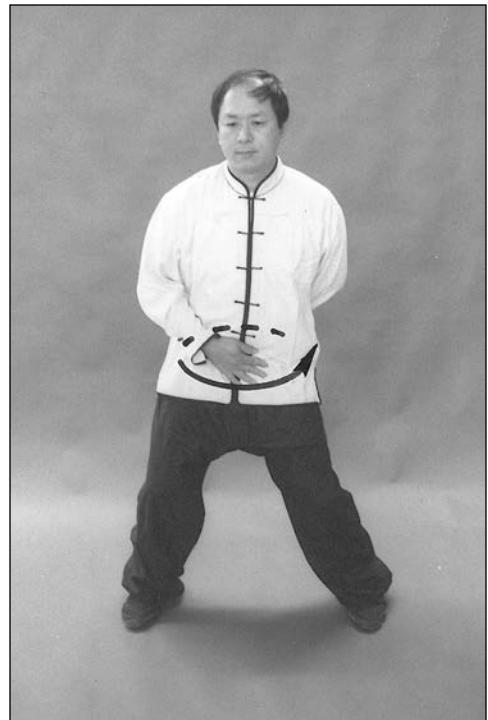


FIGURE 4-7

waist muscles easily, start making the circles smaller, and also start using your Yi to lead the Qi from the Dan Tian to move in these circles. The final goal is to have only a slight physical movement, but a strong movement of Qi.

When you practice, concentrate your mind on your abdomen, and inhale and exhale deeply and smoothly. Remember that breathing deep does not mean breathing heavily. When you breathe deep, keep the diaphragm and the muscles surrounding the lungs relaxed. Inhale to lead the Qi into the center of the body and exhale to lead the Qi out through the skin.

b. Massaging the Stomach, Liver, Spleen, Gall Bladder, and Kidneys

按摩胃、肝、脾、膽、與腎臟

Beneath your diaphragm is your stomach, to the right are your liver and gall bladder, and to the left is your spleen, and in the back are your kidneys. Once you can comfortably do the circular movement in your lower abdomen, change the movement from horizontal to vertical, and extend it up to your diaphragm. The easiest way to loosen the area around the diaphragm is to use a wave-like motion between the perineum and the diaphragm (Figure 4-8). You may find it helpful when you practice this to place one hand on your Lower Dan Tian and your other hand above it with the thumb on the solar plexus. Use a forward and backward wave-like motion, flowing up to the diaphragm and down to the perineum and back. While you do this, inhale deeply when the motion is starting at the perineum and exhale as it reaches the diaphragm. Practice ten times.

Next, continue the movement while turning your body slowly to one side and then to the other (Figure 4-9). This will slightly tense the muscles on one side and loosen them on the other, which will massage the internal organs. Repeat ten times.

This exercise loosens the muscles around the stomach, liver, gall bladder, spleen, and kidneys, and therefore improves the Qi circulation there. It also trains you in using your mind to lead Qi from your Lower Dan Tian upward to the solar plexus area.

c. Massaging the Lungs and Heart 按摩肺與心

This exercise loosens up the chest and helps to regulate and improve the Qi circulation in the lungs. According to the theory of the five phases in Chinese medicine, the

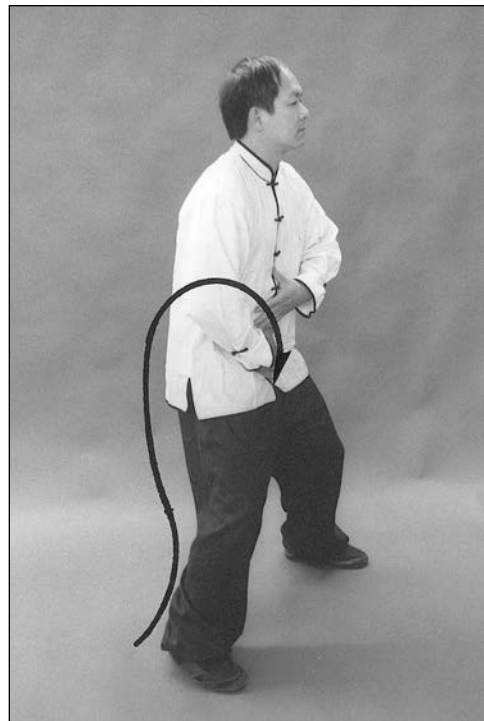


FIGURE 4-8



FIGURE 4-9

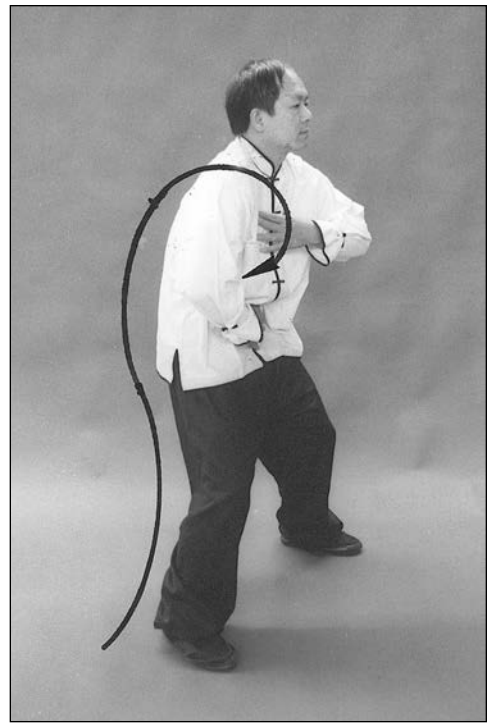


FIGURE 4-10

lungs belong to the element Metal (Jin, 金) while the heart belongs to the element Fire (Huo, 火). Metal is able to cool down Fire, and the lungs are able to regulate the Qi of the heart. The heart is the most vital organ, and its condition is closely related to our life and death. If there is too much Qi in the heart (when it is too Yang), you speed up its degeneration and become prone to heart attacks. For this reason, Qigong places great emphasis on using the lungs to regulate the Qi in the heart. If we know how to relax the lungs and keep the Qi circulating in them smoothly, they will be able to regulate the heart more efficiently.

After loosening up the center portion of your body, extend the movement up to your chest. The wave-like movement starts in the abdomen, moves through the stomach, and up to the chest. You may find it easier to feel the movement if you hold one hand on your abdomen and the other lightly touching your chest (Figure 4-10). After you have done the movement ten times, extend the movement to your shoulders (Figure 4-11). Inhale when you move your shoulders backward and exhale when you move them forward. The inhalation and exhalation should be as deep as comfortably possible, and the entire chest should be very loose. Repeat the motion ten times.

Massaging the Internal Organs with your Hands 用手按摩內臟

Using the hands to massage the internal organs is a natural human instinct, and we do it whenever we feel pain or Qi stagnation in or near an organ. For example, if you

have a diarrhea and feel pain in your abdomen, you naturally massage yourself with your hand. Or if you overeat you automatically stroke or rub your stomach with your palms to ease the pain.

According to Chinese medicine, in the center of each palm is a cavity or gate called the “Laogong (P-8)” (勞宮) which is used to regulate the Qi of the heart whenever the Qi flow is too strong (Figure 4-12). Unless you are sick, the Qi in the heart is normally more positive than is necessary, especially in the summertime. When you are excited or nervous, even more Qi accumulates around the heart. When this happens, the centers of your palms will feel warm and will often sweat.

Since the Qi in the center of the palm is always strong, you can use this Qi to help the stagnant organ Qi to flow smoothly. Chinese physicians and Qigong practitioners have developed a number of ways of using the hands to improve the Qi circulation in the internal organs. In this section we will introduce a few common ones that can be practiced easily by anyone. It is not true that only an expert can heal people with his hands. Anyone can do it if they know how.

a. Abdomen 小腹

To massage your abdomen and regulate the Qi circulation in your large and small intestines, place one hand on top of the other on your lower abdomen (Figure 4-13). If you are right-handed, it is better if you place your right hand on the bottom and the left hand on the top. Naturally, if you are left-handed, place the left hand on the bottom. The reason for this is quite simple: the Qi is strongest in the hand you use most often, and it is easier for you to lead the Qi from it.

When you massage your abdomen, it is best if you lie down so that your lower body is relaxed and the Qi can circulate more easily and smoothly. Hold your hand lightly against the skin and gently circle your hands clockwise, which is the direction of movement within the large intestine (Figure 4-13). Circling in the other direction would hinder the natural movements of peristalsis. Massage until you feel warm and comfortable deep inside your body.

As you massage, your breathing should be relaxed, deep, and comfortable. Place your mind a few inches under your palms. The mind will then be able to lead the Qi inward to smooth out Qi and blood stagnation.

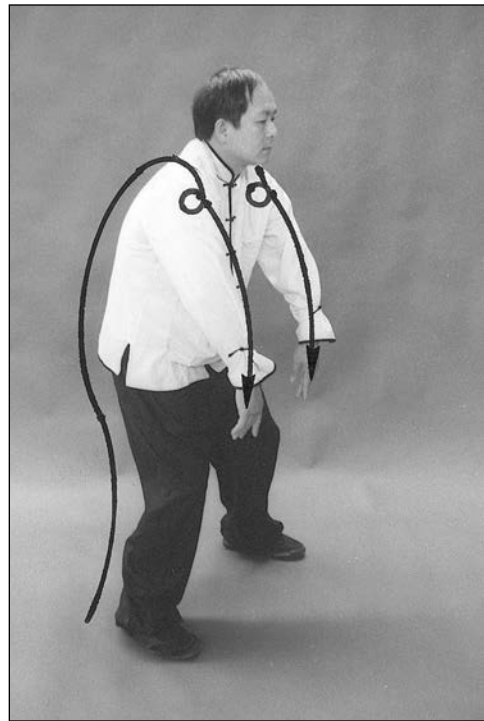


FIGURE 4-11

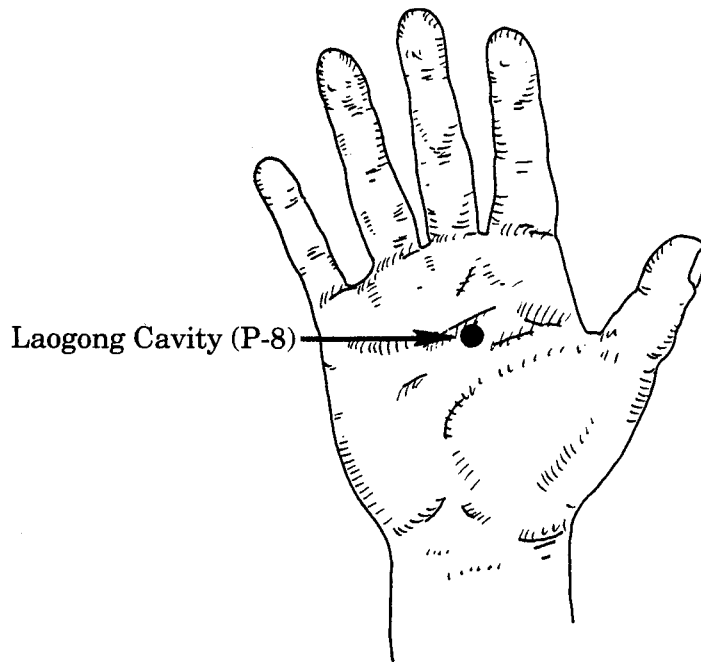


FIGURE 4-12. LAOGONG CAVITY

b. Liver, Stomach, Spleen, and Gall Bladder

肝、胃、脾、與膽

In Qigong massage for the internal organs, the liver, stomach, spleen, and the gall bladder are usually included in the same techniques because they are all located in the middle of the front of the body. Maintaining healthy Qi circulation in an organ requires not only that the circulation in the organ



FIGURE 4-13

itself be smooth, but also that the circulation between the organs be smooth. Therefore, when you massage these four internal organs, you should treat them as one instead of four.

Hold your hands as you did when massaging the lower abdomen, only now place them above the navel. Experience has shown that clockwise is again more effective than counterclockwise (Figure 4-14). It is easiest to do this massage when you are lying down.



FIGURE 4-14

It is also best if you have someone else to massage you, because it is then easiest for you to relax. Massage until you feel warm inside.

c. Kidneys 腎

Chinese medicine considers the kidneys to be perhaps the most important internal organs. The kidneys affect how the other organs function, so almost all forms of Qigong place heavy emphasis on keeping them healthy.

To massage your own kidneys, close your hands into fists and place the thumb/index finger sides on your kidneys. Gently circle both fists until the kidneys are warm. In the summer, when your kidneys are normally too Yang, it is desirable to dissipate some of the Qi. This can be done by circling your right hand clockwise and your left hand counterclockwise (Figure 4-15). This leads the Qi to the sides of your body. However, when you massage your kidneys in the wintertime, when the kidney Qi is normally deficient (too Yin), then you should reverse the direction and lead the Qi to the center of your back to nourish the kidneys. As usual, the breathing and the mind are important keys to successful practice.

There are other methods of improving the Qi circulation in the kidneys. One of the most common ones is to massage the bottoms of your feet. There is a Qi gate in the front center of each sole that is called “Yongquan

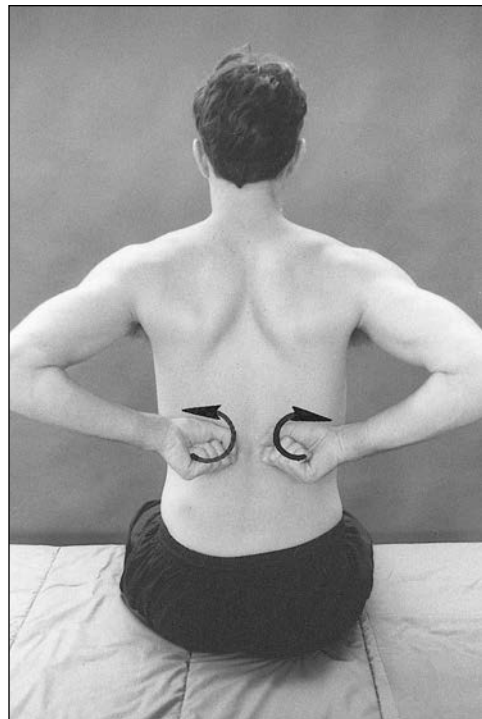


FIGURE 4-15

Index

- A Comparative Study of the Zhou (Dynasty) Book of Changes* 27-28
acupressure 6-7, 96-97
acupuncture 1, 6-8, 30-31, 38, 86
adrenal glands 25
aging 80
ankles 132-134, 155-156
ankylosing spondylitis 77
Arm-swinging Qigong 151-152
arms 140
arthritis, Chinese treatment of 66-67, 85, 88-89, 93-94
arthritis, western treatment of 65-66, 88, 89, 93-94
asthma 38
Ba Duan Jin 30-31
Bagua 5-6
Baguazhang 31, 40-41
Bao Shen Mi Yao 30-31
Becker, Robert O. 9, 14
Bend and Straighten the Waist 139-140
Bian Shi 26-27
bioelectricity 1, 4-5, 8, 11, 89
blood 23-24
The Body Electric 9
bone marrow 25
Bone Marrow Washing Qigong 24-25
bones 25-26
Book of Changes 5-6, 26-27
brain 18-20
Brain Washing Enlightenment Meditation 33
brass man of acupuncture 30
breathing 15-16, 20-21, 44-45, 50, 53-54
Buddhahood 41
Buddhism 6-7, 26, 28, 41
cancer 38
capsule 68
cartilage 68
causes of arthritis 79
cavities 39
cavity press 87, 96-97, 116-118
cell replacement 22-25
chronic inflammation 74-76
clothing 82
conception 16-17
The Confucian Point of View 29-30
Confucianism 36-37
Confucius 35-36, 57-58
Crane Flying 150-151
Cross Currents 14
cycles 5-6
Da Mo 29, 39
Dan Tian 11-12, 14-20
dancing 32-33
Dao De Jing 27-28, 35-36
Daoism 6-7, 16-17, 26, 28, 33-36, 41
defective genes 80
desires 41
diagnosis 2
diet 22-23, 81
digestion 23
drugs treatment 89
Eight Pieces of Brocade 30-33, 37-38, 88-89
elbows 127-128, 130-132, 146-147
electricity 8
electromagnetic energy 4-5
electromagnetic fields 81
electromotive force (EMF) 8, 10-11, 12-14, 95
embryo 16-17
emotional mind 99-100
emotions 41
enlightenment 41
exercise 15-16, 31-33, 94
fasciae 18-20
feet 132-134
Feng Shi 67, 86
Feng Shui 6
fibromyalgia 79
fibrositis 79
fingers 130
Fire 45-46
Five Animal Sports 33, 37-38
Five Element theory 56
Flying Finger Waves Gong 140-142
food 22-23
Front Waving 148-150
Front-Back Swinging Arms 151-152
Front-Side Swing Arms 152
gall bladder 106, 109-110
genetic material 47-49
goals 55
gout 70
Grand Circulation Meditation 33
hands 130, 140
heart 106-107, 112-113
Heberden's nodes 73
herbal treatment 6-8, 86
herbs 38
hip 128, 134, 158
hormone 24-25, 48-49, 91-92, 95
Horse Stance Training 157-158
Huebner, Albert L. 9-10
Illustration of the Brass Man Acupuncture and Moxibustion 30
immune system 91-92
infectious arthritis 70
injury 9, 80
intestines 17-19
Jin Dynasty 28-29

Arthritis Relief

- Jin Kui Yao Lue* 27-28
- Jing 47-49
- joint anatomy 68-70
- juvenile rheumatoid arthritis 76-77
- Kan 42-43
- Kan and Li imbalance 45-46
- kidneys 104-106, 110
- knees 127-128, 134, 156
- Laogong (P-8) 108
- Large Dragon Softens Its Body 138-139
- Large Dragon Turns Its Body 138-139
- large intestine 104-105
- legs 153-154
- Leviton, Richard 9
- Li 42-43
- Liang Dynasty 39
- Life Nourishing Secrets* 29-30
- lifestyle 81
- Lifting Movement 146-147
- ligaments 68-69
- Lion Rotates its Head 139-140
- Liu He Ba Fa 40-41
- liver 106, 109-110
- longevity 41, 79-80
- Look Left and Right 136-137
- Loosening the Torso Muscles 102-103
- lungs 106-107, 111-112
- lupus 78
- Lyme disease 78
- Marrow Washing Qigong 9, 24-25
- Marrow/Brain Washing Classic* 29, 39
- Marrow/Brain Washing Qigong 114
- Marshal Yue Fei 30-31, 37-38
- martial arts 39
- massage 6-7, 86, 96, 114-116
- Massaging the Internal Organs 107-108
- meat 22-23
- meditation 6-7
- Mencius 35-36
- Ming Dynasty 31
- Moving the Body Up and Down 156-158
- muscle strength 94
- Muscle/Tendon Changing 39, 114
- Muscle/Tendon Changing Classic* 29
- muscles 17-18
- Nan Hua Jing* 27-28
- Nan Jing* 27-28
- neck 118-119, 136-137
- Nei Dan Qigong 23-24, 30, 34, 40
- Nei Jing 26-27
- nervous system 18-20
- oracle-bone scripture 26-27
- organs 44, 90-91, 95, 101-102
- Original Essence 44
- Original Jing 47-49
- Original Qi 48-49
- osteoarthritis 72-73
- ovaries 114
- Palms 130
- pineal gland 91-92
- pituitary gland 48-49, 91-92
- pollution 22
- polymyalgia rheumatica 79
- Prescriptions from the Golden Chamber* 27-28
- Qi,
 - adjustment 7-8
- Qi,
 - and arthritis 1-2
 - channels 7, 11, 30
 - circulation 7, 11, 13-14, 32-33, 38-40, 90
 - concept of 1, 3, 4, 5, 47
 - deficiency 80
 - and exercise 15-16
 - generation 21-22
 - Hua Lun 5-6
 - imbalance 1-2, 39, 42-44
 - level 7-8
 - and longevity 6
 - reservoirs 7-8
 - stagnation 38
 - storage 11, 14-16, 25-26, 49-50
 - and Yin-Yang balance 4
- Qigong,
 - development of 6-7, 26
 - practice 15-16, 23-24, 50, 57, 87, 136
 - martial 39
 - medical 37-38
 - religious 41
 - scholar 35-36
 - types of exercises 33-35
 - use 2, 6-7
- Qing Dynasty 31
- Raise and Lower the Leg 158
- Regulating Spirit 60
- Regulating the Body 51, 100
- Regulating the Breathing 53, 100
- Regulating the Mind 55-56, 101
- Regulating the Qi 50-51, 59-60, 101
- Regulating the Spirit 101
- reincarnation 41
- Reiter's syndrome 78-79
- relaxation 51-52
- respiration 21-24
- rheumatoid arthritis 74-76
- Rolling the Taiji Ball 142
- rooting 52
- Rotating the Ankles 155-156
- Rotating the Elbows 147-148
- Rotating the Shoulders 148
- Rotating the Waist 139-140
- Rotating the Wrists 144-145
- Rotating the Wrists while Holding Hands 145

- Rotating the Wrists with Interlocked Fingers 144-145
Ru Men Shi Shi 29-30
 season 38-39
 sexual activity 82
 Shang Dynasty 26-27
 shaolin gongfu 30, 40
 Shen 47-49
 Shiatsu massage 96-97
 shoulders 127-128, 132, 148-150
 sickness 9
 Sideward Motion and Rotating the Hip 158-159
 Sideward Movement 147-148
 Sitting Chan 33
 Sjogren's syndrome 78
 skin breathing 25-26
 skin conductivity 10
 Small Circulation Meditation 33
 Small Intestine 104-105
 Song Dynasty 30-31
 spinal cord 18-20
 spine 119-122, 137-138
 spleen 106, 109-110
 sports medicine 2
 Squeeze the Toes 154
 stomach 106, 109-110
 stone probes 26-27
 Straighten and Bend Movement 156-157
 stretching 94
 Swimming Octopus 140-142
 symptoms 65-66
 synovium 68
 Taiji 30
 Taiji balls 142-143
 Taiji Qigong 33, 40-41
 Taijiquan 2, 40-41, 88-89
 tension 81
 testicles 114
Theory of Qi's Variation 5-6
 Three Treasures 46-47
 Tiger Claw Training 142
 time of day 7-8
 toes 132-134, 154
 Tong Ren Yu Xue Zhen Jiu Tu 30
 traditional Chinese medicine, diagnosis 1
 ulcers 38
 Up and Down Movements 154-155
 uric acid 70-72
 urinary bladder 104-105
 vegetarian 22-23
 vessels 16
 virus 75-76
 Wai Dan Qigong 23-24, 30-34, 39-40
 waist 123-124, 139
 walking 153-154
 Walking on the Toes 154-155
 Water 45-46
 weak joints 80
 weakness of the internal organs 79-80
 weather, influence of 1-2
 western influence 31
 western medicine 2
 wisdom mind 99-100
 wrists 127-128, 130-132, 144
 Wuji state 46
 Wuji Qigong 40-41
 Xi Sui Jing 29
 Xin 45
 Xingyiquan 40-41
Yang Shen Fu Yu 30-31
Yang Shen Jue 29-30
 Yellow Emperor (Huang Di) 26-27
 Yi 57
Yi Fan Ji Jie 30-31
Yi Jin Jing 29
Yi Jing 5-6, 26-27
 Yin and Yang 7-8, 12, 32-33, 40-43, 46-47
 Yongquan 52
 Zhou Dynasty 27-28
 Zhou Yi Can Tong Qi 27-28