

Chinese Health Exercises

Chi Kung (Qi Gong)

“Chi Kung literally means “working on one’s Chi”, or life force.

The series of exercises presented here can be used as a morning routine. You are welcome to pick and choose the exercises that work for you. Remember the concept of Chi’an Su Jing – the silkworm spiraling as it spins the cocoon, that spiral innate in all things.

- The basic routine is broken down into four parts:
- Vigorous self massage
- Rotation of the joints of the body
- Breath exercises to guide the breath through the main energy pathways
- “Eight Pieces of Brocade” – an ancient system of eight exercises designed to activate the main energetic pathways and organ systems of the body.

The “Prayer of Light” as a breath practice is included at the end.

Standing; Begin by an awareness of the body’s relaxed presence on the earth and in space. Feet are on the earth in a balanced manner. Knees are soft. Become aware of the point at the center of the foot just behind the ball of the foot. This point is how the body connects with the earth’s/receptive energies. At the same time bring awareness to the crown chakra, imagining a chord running from crown to heaven – going down to the base of the spine. This is how the body connects with the air/heaven/creative energies. The body is the link between earth and heaven.

The inner thighs spread outward in a subtle fashion such that there is a straight line of force from the knees to the feet. With a bit of practice this becomes natural and comfortable. Notice a feeling of connection with earth and sky.

I: Self Massage; This set covers the body in a few minutes, activating and energizing. Begin by rubbing the hands vigorously back and forth to generate heat, return to this motion throughout the exercise.

Rub up and down on the face, bringing awareness to the relationship of the skin and flesh of the face with the bones underneath. Next, back and forth across the forehead, moving down to the eyes, with attention to the motion being horizontal – not angling down making “sad” eyes. Next rub the hands/index fingers up and down on the sides of the nose with awareness of sinus cavities underneath. Back and forth in an opposed motion on the upper and lower lip will stimulate the main connection that takes place in the mouth. Place the tip of the tongue on the roof of the mouth, at the place where the palette turns upward. Keep it gently resting in this place throughout the practice.

Now you have completed the face. Make your fingers into a V and rub up and down on either side of the ears to stimulate lymph glands and activate points around the ears. Flap the ear flaps- top down and bottom up. Moving on to the scalp: begin at the forehead and move the skin on the scalp in a motion moving front to back with the finger tips one inch out from a center part. Do this again, two inches out from the center part. As you go down the back of the scalp, activate the hollows at the back of the skull. The head is now awake!

Grab the flesh and muscles of the shoulders and let the weight of your arms bring the muscles forward in a deep massage. Next, rub the pectorals and be aware of the lymph glands that are located there. Include arrhythmic tapping as well if you like.

Move down to the kidneys – rub vigorously. Pat with fists if this feels good to your body. You can also include the twist side to side hitting pectorals and kidneys in a relaxed manner.

As the body begins to move, go up and down as if touching your toes (do not push beyond your own physical limits), proceed by running the hands down the outside of the legs and up the inside. This will activate the yin and yang channels of the body. Yang channel – outside, yin channel – inner legs. Breath naturally follows movement.

Do the opposite action with the arms: up the outside and down the inside. Now your body is ready to begin....

II. Rotation of the joints of the body;

Begin by rotating ankles and move up the body to include knees, hips, waist, shoulders and wrists. To rotate knee and hip socket stand on one leg, place the knee in space and draw a circle with the foot. Next, draw a circle with your knee in space, feeling the hip's placement in the hip socket. Be aware of your connection with the earth as you do this.

Follow with hips, waist, shoulders, arms, neck. When all the joints have been rotated... *Shake like a yellow dog.*

III. Breathing exercises: This is the foundation of a Chi Kung practice. Emphasis is on the points at the center of the foot directly behind the ball of the foot, the crown chakra, the heart chakra, and the hara center, or tan tien (in Chinese), located about an inch and a half below the navel. Chakras can be visualized as portals, as 3 dimensional balls, or as mental concepts at the beginning. Explore including wazifas with these practices. Four exercises are included here:

1. Prayer Breath: First find your stance. Feet are parallel and a bit more than shoulder width apart. The point behind the ball of your foot is connecting with the ground. The crown is open to the sky. This breath can be used for the basic prayers. Find your natural rhythm with the breath and movements.
Inbreath: up the inside of the legs to the heart chakra– *outbreath:* out the heart chakra. Second Breath: *inbreath:* sweep the arms up and out overhead, gathering and condensing in through the crown – *outbreath:* hands float down in front of the body, feeling the breath transform the body. This practice unites your internal and external worlds, harmonizing with heaven and earth.
2. Expansion/Contraction breath: This is a series of 4 breaths: Reach to the front, above, to the sides, and below. First: hands to heart, at shoulders, on the inbreath and expand to the front on the outbreath, second hands to heart (shoulders) on the inbreath and reach to the heavens on the outbreath, third hands to heart (shoulders) on the inbreath, reach to either side on the outbreath, and lastly, hands to heart (shoulders) on the inbreath, and reach down to the tan tien to plant the energy upon completion. This exercise can help activate one's energy field and help aid in discerning what comes into it and what is kept at a distance. The reverse breathing works well with this exercise.

3. The Ball: Using reverse breath if that is comfortable, but regular breath if that is more comfortable. Imagine a big ball just in front of your tan tien. Gently hold the ball in your relaxed, but energized hands. As you breath in, the ball gets smaller and the energy builds, as you breath out, the ball expands with the breath to gather energy from the radiant air around you. Build the ball with two breaths, on the third, gently raise the ball and put it into your third eye. Slowly run your hands down a few inches in front of the body – palms facing the body- visualizing a bath in radiance and healing as you do so. Be aware of the bone marrow, cells, flow of fluids, -of all of the internal universe that is receiving this bath of light. Include “ya Nur” if that resonates. Also, this is a good time to work with inner smile practice.
4. Microcosmic orbit: inbreath: up the back, through the center of the spine. This breath begins behind the lower chakra (tan tien) and is activated by awareness of the perineum. The outbreath begins at the crown charkra and goes down the front of the body. The tongue on the roof of the mouth will act as a connection that will complete the circle. This practice is the Chi Kung version of Kundalini: the energy is circulated in a continuous loop. Valuable in times of intensive energy.

Eight Pieces of Brocade: All breath follows naturally and is soft and relaxed.

1. “Monster/ Mime”: Hands act as if the wrists are held by strings. Raise up –up until you are on your toes, then gently slide down a pane of glass that is about a foot in front of you as you sink sink down. Repeat 4 times.
2. Kidney Twist 1: This exercise is best understood by visualizing that you are standing in the center of a compass – looking north. All motion is done on the 45 degree angle – all motion is in opposition – for example the hips move the opposite direction as the ribs. Reach to the NW as you look to the NE. Hips follow the gaze, stance is solid so the twist occurs at the waist. Repeat to opposite direction and then repeat each side.
3. Kidney twist 2: Same compass as above, but now you reach behind you to the SW as you look over your shoulder to the SE. Be acutely aware of the body at the point, check alignments and opposition of movement. Repeat 2 times each side.
4. Stretch: Arms go directly to each side of the body. Visualize a perfectly straight line from fingertip to fingertip. Next, form a triangle overhead and then reach high above to heaven. Clasp fingers, palms to sky and stretch up up up. Now, bending at the hips, keep the spine straight, bend as close to the ground as you can comfortably go (don’t push it). Begin with the base of the spine, gently roll up, stacking one vertebrae on top of the next as you go.
5. Internal organ stretch: Stand feet close together. Spiral up the center line with the right hand as the left goes around the waist channel, down the center line of the back and reaches down. Press into the earth with the right foot (oppositional movement again).Undo the motion in reverse, then repeat to the other side, and do at least one more rep each side. Remember to lead with the elbow, not the hand.
6. Toes: bounce up and down on your toes, with awareness of the point behind the ball of the foot. Do this eight times eight times.
7. The Bow (for lungs). Scoop down with the right hand as the left hand is directly out to your side. Draw the bow through the “dragon’s mouth”, or fleshy part of the hand between thumb and forefinger. Visualize the movements of the spongy tissue of the lungs. Pour weight from right to left as you pull the bow.
8. Gather and drop: Gather all of your force on to your toes and drop to the ground to ground the exercises and put feet firmly upon the earth.

Barrel

Stand with feet wider than shoulder width. Make it a strong stance and lower your center of gravity as much as is comfortable. Widen your stance as is comfortable for you, but be aware of the energy going straight from knees to foot. Spread the inner thighs.

1. Imagine a barrel in front of you on the ground.
2. Lower your center of gravity and take a sip.
3. Pour it off to the left – Elbows are perpendicular to the ground.
4. Repeat to the right.
5. Set the barrel on your left thigh and wipe your brow with your right arm.
6. Pass through your center and move to the right, set the barrel on your right thigh and wipe your brow with your left arm.
7. Pour the barrel behind your left thigh, try to get the elbows perpendicular to the ground.
8. Repeat to the right and continue as if to pour the barrel over your head.

Repeat the entire process to the other side.

Inner Smile – find your smile – be it a saint a child or a guide. Work with the luminous substance of that smile as you place it in each organ and system of body and being. Each time giving thanks for the function and for grace.

Bone Marrow Nei Gong – Work on sensing your actual bone marrow as it works to create balance and health in the organism. Begin with finger tips, one at a time, breathing in to the first knuckle, and then on up the arm, through the collarbone to the sternum in progressive breaths, perhaps over several sessions. When the breath reaches the sternum allow the marrow concentration to move through the ribs to the spine.

Then move on to the toes, same sequence, until you are able to breath in through fingers and toes simultaneously and the bone cleansing meets in the spinal column. The skull is activated through the spinal column. Be patient with this exercise as it often takes time to build, but what else is there to do with life? You can practice this one almost anywhere – in line at the bank, or as part of the morning practice.

Three Breath Cycle: 1) Cleansing Breath: *Inbreath:* Arms up the inside of the body overhead – energy shooting out top of head like a fountain. *Outbreath:* Arms fall naturally to either side. 2) Generative Breath: *Inbreath:* Arms up to the outside to meet overhead. *Outbreath:* Hands pass down the front of the body. 3) Brown Bear Fords the River: *Inbreath:* Move arms out to either side, as if taking a wide stroke in stream, let hands meet at T’an Tien (Hara Center) *Outbreath:* Hands out from heart as if in offering.

Give Thanks to the inner and outer world that we walk the planet this day in these amazing organisms – vehicles for awakening and transformation. Breath the inner smile into the eyes and all of the being as it radiates out to all you touch.

Mevlevi Prayer of Light

Oh God! Grant me light in my heart, Light in my grave, Light in
front of me, Light behind me,
Light to my right, light to my left, Light above
me, Light below me, Light in my ears, Light in
my eyes, Light on my skin, Light in my hair,
Light within my flesh, Light in my Blood, Light in my bones
Oh God! Increase my Light everywhere.

Oh God! Grant me Light in my heart,
Light on my tongue, Light in my eyes, light in my ears, Light to my
right, Light to my left,
Light above me, Light below me, Light in front of
me, Light behind me, And Light within myself.
Oh God, Grant me light in my heart.

Breath – breathe in on “heart” – out on “grave” in the first line, and then follow your own rhythm for the rest of the prayer. The prayer can be adapted to each person’s focus for illumination.

