



Qigong for Health

Have you heard of qigong (pronounced *chee kung*)? This gentle Chinese practice dating back several thousand years is finding its way into mainstream American culture. If you are busy, qigong is perfect for you since it requires no apparatus, props or special clothing and can be performed within the space of an office cubicle. What's more, the exercises can be done sitting, standing or even lying down. And once learned, they can be practiced inside or outside, on any type of surface.

Here is why qigong is so powerful, according to Ted J. Cibik, ND, DMQ (China), H/FI, founder and executive director of Inner Strength Inc. and former dean of Henan University of Medical QiGong and Traditional Chinese Medicine in the United States.

How Qigong Heals

According to the ancient qi masters, qi is the fundamental energy of the universe, and qigong practice cultivates this energy, thereby awakening natural self-healing properties within the body, mind and spirit.

Qigong's healing effect is based on the same principles as acupuncture. Each exercise works on a particular "meridian" or "collateral" in the body. In Chinese medicine, meridians and collaterals are "energy pathways." Meridians are the major channels, and collaterals are smaller pathways branching off the meridians. For stress reduction, health maintenance and

sports conditioning, qigong movements are used to stimulate and increase the flow of blood and qi to the various meridians and collaterals.

Dynamic qigong for health consists of exercises that, in Western terms, combine continuous static stretching, breath work and visualization with multiplanar movements designed to stabilize the core. Mastering the subtleties of this practice takes time and patience, but the basic exercises can be learned and performed easily.

Reducing High Blood Pressure

Recent studies have shown that qigong practice can favorably affect various health conditions.

There is evidence, for example, that qigong can lower high blood pressure. Researchers recruited 36 hypertensive men and women and divided them into two groups: a qigong group and a control group. The first group practiced qigong for 8 weeks. The investigators recorded levels of blood pressure as well as total cholesterol and other lipids among all study subjects. Patients in the qigong group significantly reduced both their blood pressure and their total-cholesterol levels. The research was published in the *International Journal of Neuroscience* (2004; 114 [7], 777-86).

Helping Risk Factors for Diabetes

Another study looked at targeting the risk factors for diabetes. At the University of Queensland in Australia, a pilot 3-month study on the effects of qigong and tai chi practice on diabetes achieved very successful results. For the study, Liu Xin, a qigong and tai chi master, developed a series of exercises especially designed to impact the risk factors for diabetes.

qigong resources

Would you like to learn more about qigong, the gentle Chinese practice with many benefits? Check out these resources:

- Inner Strength Health and Wellness Center, www.inner-strength.org
- Qigong Institute, www.qigonginstitute.org
- National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, <http://nccam.nih.gov>
- National Qigong Association, www.nqa.org/

The 11 participants gained numerous health benefits from the regular practice of tai chi and qigong. Their flexibility improved, they had more energy, and they found they were sleeping better. "One of the most important results that came from the study was the significant reduction in waist circumference measurement," said Liu. "Waist circumference is an indicator of central obesity, and central obesity is recognized as an important risk factor for developing many health problems, including diabetes and cardiovascular diseases." The results were released on UQ News Online, a university of Queensland website, in December 2005. Following this pilot study, the researchers began recruiting volunteers for a larger trial.

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