



Introduction

Qigong is a Daoist / Chinese practice for balancing and awakening life force – Qi / Chi. Its origins can be traced back over 3,000 years. There are many different forms of qigong and it also underpins many popular martial arts including Tai Chi. It can be highly beneficial for general fitness and health and is also a wonderful way of contacting and refining the subtle energies and qualities of awareness required for developing a deep sense of contentment through meditation.

This simple daily routine has been derived from teachings received from a few different teachers including Bruce Frantzis (www.energyarts.com) and Ged Sumner (www.naturalmovement.info). If you are interested in deepening into the practices, it is highly recommended you spend time with experienced practitioners & teachers.

With all the forms described below, the key is to stay well within your comfort limits – between 30% and 70% of your capacity (closer to 30% if you have an injury or are unwell). Modify any alignment cues to suit your natural alignments. Focus not so much on stretching the physical tissue, but more on lubricating the joints and connecting with a sense of fluid space, both within and beyond the body.

Start with a few forms per day – 5-10 mins or so, then slowly build up over several weeks.

1. Standing Alignments

- a. Stand with feet about shoulder width apart (slightly wider OK), feet pointing forward or slightly pigeon-toed (to open space in the lower back and sacrum).
- b. Eyes open, soft gaze, slightly below horizontal.
- c. Slight bend in the knees, allow the pelvis to soften and sink, tuck tailbone under slightly, soft abdomen, invite a gentle belly breath.
- d. Soft, spacious heart, roll shoulders forward, invite space between shoulder blades, beneath armpits and between arms and body. Thumbs pointing to thighs.
- e. Allowing the crown to lift, long back of neck, slight chin tuck, tongue touching upper front teeth or palate.
- f. Feel into the feet and in particular the bubbling spring point.
- g. Invite any tensions to soften, sink and dissolve down through the torso, legs, and into the floor.
- h. Keep working with these principles as you use the other forms described below.

2. Swing

- a. Start in standing alignments with loose arms. Begin gently turning the torso from side to side (about 45 degrees each way), gathering up the arms until they are driving the momentum of the swing.
- b. Start to shift part of the weight from one foot to the other as you swing, giving a sense of pumping Qi between the sides of the body through the legs. Weight shifts to the side you are swinging towards.
- c. Have a sense of a light shining from the heart, moving from side to side as you swing, and keep the head looking in the direction of the light.
- d. Work on closing the 'kwa' / the inguinal crease on the side you are turning towards, and opening the other side.
- e. Gently tap the kidneys (mid back) with loose hands as you swing (only if comfortable).



3. Balancing the side channels

- a. Start with right arm, gather Qi from the earth with the hand then draw up the right side of the body, palm facing up.
- b. When you get to the shoulder, roll the hand over and push Qi back down to earth, palm facing down.
- c. Start engaging the left arm also and alternating, so that when you are drawing up with one side, you are pushing down with the other.

4. Clearing the Midline

- a. Similar to (3), but both hands together - drawing up either side of the midline.
- b. When you reach the shoulder, roll the hands over and push down to earth. Repeat.

5. Sweeping the Earth

- a. Start with right hand in front of navel, palm facing to earth
- b. Make a clockwise circle to the right and moving behind you
- c. As the hand comes back to your midline, begin moving the left hand in an anticlockwise circle to the left of the body
- d. Continue making figure-8s at the level of the hips for 10 or so repetitions
- e. Move to level of solar plexus and repeat
- f. Move to level of heart and repeat.

6. Shoulder Rolls

- a. Starting with right shoulder - gently roll shoulder backwards in small circles several times.
- b. Next start to engage the elbow and make rolls bigger.
- c. Eventually work towards engaging the whole arm, stretching to the fingertips.
- d. Repeat for the other arm.
- e. Continue with the full arm roll, but alternate sides (ie: a bit like backstroke).

7. Gathering Qi

- a. With both arms at hip level, start moving out to the sides and connecting to the space around.
- b. Bring arms up and join palms over the head.
- c. Draw hands down the midline, palms together.
- d. When you get to the level of hips, separate hands and repeat.

8. Spinal Stretch

- a. Finish with this to help integrate the previous forms.
- b. With soft pelvis, divide the spine into four zones in your mind – lower back & sacrum, mid back, upper back, and neck & head.
- c. Focus on the lower zone first - inviting a sense of space, allowing tensions to sink and dissolve. After a minute or so, allow this portion of your spine to drop downwards, slightly opening the back of the vertebrae and closing the front.
- d. Repeat for zone 2, the mid back.
- e. Repeat for zone 3, the upper back – this time allowing the back of the spine to lengthen upward while the front of the spine closes.
- f. Repeat for zone 4, the neck and head – finishing with the head hanging softly.
- g. Drink Qi through the bubbling spring, up the inside of the legs and through the pelvis. Continue drinking up the front of the spine and slowly opening the spine, coming back to neutral.
- h. Repeat several times, aiming to develop a sense of flow and clear awareness of each vertebrae.