

FAQ on Qigong and Meditation



Q: What is Qigong? What is Qi?

A: Qigong is a general term for a variety of traditional Chinese energy exercises or therapies. The practice has had thousands of years of history in China. The word “Qigong” literally means skill or cultivation of vital energy (qi). Qigong practice refers to the mind-body operational skills or processes that integrate the adjustments of body, mind and breath into oneness.

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) believes that good health is the result of a free-flowing, well-balanced *qi* (bio-energy) system, while sickness, pain or physical disorders are the result of *qi* blockage, or unbalanced *qi* in the body. Qigong practice helps to balance the *qi* system in the body and break the *qi* blockage(s) to recover health.

There are many different forms of qigong. We at University of Maryland Center for Integrative Medicine are mainly practicing medical Qigong and Integrative Meditation based on Daoism tradition, plus some traditional qigong forms, like Liu Zi Jue (Six-syllable formula), Ba Duan Jin (Eight-piece brocade), and five-animal Qigong.

Q: What can qigong do for me?

A: It depends upon the quality and quantity of your qigong practice. Most qigong practitioners credit qigong for improving their daily lives in many ways, including:

- A more relaxed, harmonious state of mind and body
- A noticeable reduction in prior ailments and a reduction in feelings of stress
- An increased resistance to illness through a stronger immune system
- A heightened sensitivity to the body’s internal organs along with an energetic ability to regulate one’s own health and vitality.

Q: Is Qigong hard to learn?

A: No, it is quite simple; everyone can learn and practice qigong, and benefit from the practice, including those who are bed-bound with chronic illness. We teach and encourage students of qigong to integrate qigong techniques into their daily lives.

Q: What are the main elements of a general Qigong practice?

A. Since qigong is the self-care techniques that adjust breath, mind and body into oneness, different forms of qigong may start with one adjustment and extend to others. A general qigong practice may include 4 related elements, and we should not separate them artificially:

- Body posture adjustment and gentle movement (such as Tai Ji Quan and Eight-section brocade)
- Mind-focused meditation and purposeful relaxation (such as Mindfulness meditation)
- Breath regulation practice (such as reversed abdominal breathing)
- Self-administered massage

Q: What are the major components in the Integrative qigong meditation (IM)?

A: Three adjustments: adjust your body position (sit straight, and relax); adjust your breath (slow, deep and even abdominal breathing); and adjust your mind status (clear your mind of all thoughts and let your awareness stay at the lower abdomen area... relaxed and peaceful).

The three keys you need to remember during qigong practice are: **relaxation** (both physically and psychologically), **tranquility** (concentrated and undisturbed) and **naturalness** (follows whatever comes and do not resist anything). Other key components include:

- Deep slow abdominal breathing at the near-resonant frequency
- Relaxing body step-by step through breathing technique
- Warm-up lower Dantian (abdomen) with strong intent and coordinated breathing – the foundation of Daoism meditation
- Gather universe energy through skin breathing

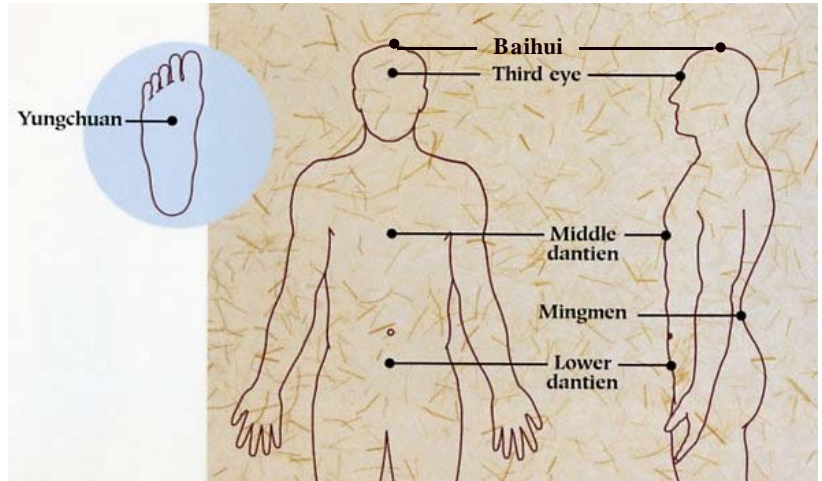
- Guided imagery helps to detoxify body and cleanse the sickness
- Reversed abdominal breathing recharge the essence, qi and Shen, and leads to a deep meditation state (oneness).

Q: How much time do I need to commit to Qigong practice in order to benefit from it?

A: It depends upon what you try to achieve and how committed you are. In general, practice is better than no practice; daily practice is better than intermittent practice; the more the better. It is best to develop your own routine, and make qigong practice part of your daily life.

Q: What are the body locations mentioned in the meditation instruction?

A: Those are the acupoints on the body which act as channels for the Qi to flow in and out. The diagram on the right shows the major acupoints mentioned in this qigong meditation. Please take a quick look at them before you start qigong meditation.



Q: What are common feelings or responses in qigong meditation?

A: It is all right if you do not feel anything in the beginning beyond feeling calm and relaxed; however, as you continue to practice you may experience different sensations. This is good! The most common sensations during qigong include warmth, cold, heat, chill, itching, tingling, and muscle tension. Other possible sensations include lightness, heaviness, or feelings of flowing, lifting, sinking, falling, hardness and softness. These sensations are normal responses and they will come and go. These are signs that your body is “waking up” and sensing new qi circulation and other positive internal changes. It’s ok to notice them and then bring your focus back to the meditation. Your qi is moving.

Q: Why do I have a problem sitting still and keeping focused? How do I deal with it?

A: It is normal for a beginner to feel irritated and disturbed by random thoughts during meditation; part of purpose for doing meditation is to train your mind and attention to be focused and restful, which is a gradual process. Do not blame yourself for not being able to concentrate, just remind yourself that your mind needs rest and this is the opportunity for it.

If you have a problem following the instructions, just lightly rest your awareness on the lower abdomen area with slow abdominal breath for the meditation period.

Q: Can I practice qi meditation without the CD instruction?

A: Yes, you are encouraged to do the qi meditation as much as possible, and whenever you would like. You will receive a copy of the transcript so you can do it on your own. Some guidelines for you are:

- ☉ Practice deep and slow abdominal breathing whenever possible (try 10 seconds each breath);
- ☉ Apply guided imagery of sacred water cleansing your inside body when you take a shower;
- ☉ Rest your awareness at the lower abdomen area whenever possible;
- ☉ When you feel tight or stressed, practicing relaxation with deep breathing (inhale tight-up and exhale relaxing -- let it go)
- ☉ Practice deep-slow breathing whenever possible, especially when you hear a noise, -- make any sound around your life a signal for you to slow your breathing...
- ☉ The best time to meditate is before you go asleep, or between 11:00pm and 1:00am; and lunch time (between 11:00am and 1:00pm).