

What is Qigong?

Qigong is an ancient Chinese health care system that integrates physical postures, breathing techniques and focused intention.

The word Qigong (Chi Kung) is made up of two Chinese words. Qi is pronounced chee and is usually translated to mean the life force or vital-energy that flows through all things in the universe.

The second word, Gong, pronounced gung, means accomplishment, or skill that is cultivated through steady practice. Together, Qigong (Chi Kung) means cultivating energy, it is a system practiced for health maintenance, healing and increasing vitality.

Qigong is an integration of physical postures, breathing techniques, and focused intentions.

Qigong practices can be classified as martial, medical, or spiritual. All styles have three things in common: they all involve a posture, (whether moving or stationary), breathing techniques, and mental focus. Some practices increase the Qi; others circulate it, use it to cleanse and heal the body, store it, or emit Qi to help heal others. Practices vary from the soft internal styles such as Tai Chi; to the external, vigorous styles such as Kung Fu. However, the slow gentle movements of most Qigong forms can be easily adapted, even for the physically challenged and can be practiced by all age groups.

Like any other system of health care, Qigong is not a panacea, but it is certainly *a highly effective health care practice*. Many health care professionals recommend Qigong as an important form of alternative complementary medicine.

Qigong creates an awareness of and influences dimensions of our being that are not part of traditional exercise programs. Most exercises do not involve the meridian system used in acupuncture nor do they emphasize the importance of adding mind intent and breathing techniques to physical movements. When these dimensions are added, the benefits of exercise increase exponentially.

The gentle, rhythmic movements of Qigong reduce stress, build stamina, increase vitality, and enhance the immune system. It has also been found to improve cardiovascular, respiratory, circulatory, lymphatic and digestive functions.

Those who maintain a consistent practice of Qigong find that it helps one regain a youthful vitality, maintain health even into old age and helps speed recovery from illness. Western scientific research confirms that Qigong reduces hypertension and the incidence of falling in the aged population. One of the more important long-term effects is that Qigong reestablishes the body/mind/soul connection.

People do Qigong to maintain health, heal their bodies, calm their minds, and reconnect with their spirit.

When these three aspects of our being are integrated, it encourages a positive outlook on life and helps eliminate harmful attitudes and behaviors. It also creates a balanced life style, which brings greater harmony, stability, and enjoyment

There are a wide variety of Qigong practices. They vary from the simple, internal forms to the more complex and challenging external styles. They can interest and benefit everyone, from the most physically challenged to the super athlete. There are Qigong classes for children, senior citizens, and every age group in between. Since Qigong can be practiced anywhere or at any time, there is no need to buy special clothing or to join a health club.

Qigong's great appeal is that everyone can benefit, regardless of ability, age, belief system or life circumstances.

