



**Qigong (Chi Kung)** comes from the Chinese words "Qi" meaning "Energy" plus "Gong", meaning "work" or "practice". It is a term that describes a Chinese Exercise system the focuses on cultivating and attracting "Qi" or "lifeforce" energies. Pronounced like "Chee Gung", Qigong (sometimes spelled "Chi Kung") is a unique Chinese exercise system. Through individual effort, practitioners build up their health and prevent illness by combining discipline of mind, body and the body's "Qi" (vital force).

Qigong draws on many elements. It includes "regulating the body" through posture, "regulating the mind" through quiet, relaxation and concentration of one's mental activity, "regulating the breath", self-massage and movement of the limbs. It covers a wide range of exercises and styles, such as "tuna" (venting and taking in), which emphasizes the practice of breath; "still" qigong, which stresses meditation and relaxation; "standing stance" qigong, which emphasizes the exercise of the body by relaxed and motionless standing posture; "moving" and dao-yin" qigong, which emphasizes external movement combined with internal quiet and practice in control of the mind; as well as various forms of self-massage.

Chinese Qigong has been practiced with a recorded history of over 2,000 years. But it wasn't until 1953, when Liu Gui-zheng published a paper entitled "Practice On Qigong Therapy", that the term Qigong (Chi Kung) was adopted as the popular name for this type of exercise system. Prior to that date, there were many terms given to such exercise, such as Daoyin, Xingqi, Liandan, Xuangong, Jinggon, Dinggon, Xinggon, Neigong, Xiudao, Zhoshan, Neiyangong, Yangshengong, etc.

### **MOVING OR STATIC, HARD OR SOFT?**

There have been many qigong schools in China. Although each school adopts unique methods, they all agree on the basic importance of regulating the mind and deepening the respiration. Western practitioners have divided and categorized qigong into various segments. The term "soft qigong" usually refers to exercises which enhance spiritual, mental, and physical health with meditation and gentle exercises. "Hard qigong" refers to exercises done in martial arts to strengthen and protect the body from vicious blows. Some divide qigong into "Medical", "Martial", or "Spiritual" categories depending on the purpose of the practice.

Within China, qigong is generally practiced in two major categories, "still" and "moving". "Still" qigong lays emphasis on quiet, motionless meditation, generally employing methods of internal concentration and regulation of breathing. It is usually practiced in outwardly motionless postures such as the lying, sitting or standing positions, and since it emphasizes exercise of the internal aspect of the body, it is often known as internal qigong.

"Moving" qigong involves movement of the limbs and body under the conscious direction of the mind, and since the movement is expressed externally, it is also known as external qigong. The Eight Pieces of Brocade is an example of moving qigong.

### **POSTURE (regulating the body)**

The first step in the practice of qigong is to assure correct posture. It is vital that the posture is natural and relaxed so as to allow smooth breathing and help lead the mind into a relaxed and quiet state. Each posture naturally has different physiological characteristics and hence will have a different healing effect on the body according to the needs of the practitioner.

### **ENTERING A QUIET STATE (regulating the mind)**

Another basic skill to be gradually mastered in qigong is how to concentrate and regulate one's mental activity so as to enter a quiet, meditative state. Much of the success of Qigong practice depends on the level of peace and quietness one can attain. This "entering a quiet state" refers to a settled and peaceful state of mind not disturbed by extraneous thoughts, the mind concentrated on one point such as the "Dantian" (about one inch below the navel) or on the very act of breathing. All awareness to external stimuli (such as sound and light) is thereby reduced, even to the point that the practitioner's sense of position and weight are lost, until one reaches a state in which they are conscious yet not conscious, aware yet not aware. In this way, the cerebral cortex enters a quiescent state. Most people find it difficult to enter such a quietened state, being frequently disturbed by extraneous thoughts. However, with patience and perseverance it can be gradually attained.





## ESSENTIAL POINTS

There are some "Essential Points of Practice" despite the varying styles and the differing importance attached to various elements by individual schools, and there are certain basic features which are essential to qigong regardless of form or school.

- **Relaxation, Quietness and Naturalness:** It is most important that during practice, both body and mind are relaxed, peaceful, and at peace. Before practice one must relieve oneself, loosen one's belt and any other restrictive clothing, and found a peaceful spot in which to practice. Make sure that one's posture is correct, back straight and body erect though not stiff, arms hanging down naturally, and the whole body relaxed, though not limp, so both mind and body are comfortable and aligned.
- **Unity of Breath and Mind:** It is critical in Qigong that the mind and breath are united by concentrating the mind on the "Dantian", so as to reach a state in which the breathing is deep, even and led by the mind.
- **Exercise and Rest Combined:** There are different methods of breathing for various forms of qigong. If one is practicing a breathing method, one should have a short rest, returning to natural breathing after ten to twenty minutes of such practice.
- **Stillness and Movement Combined:** Some forms of Qigong combine both stillness and movement into one style, such as Taijiquan, and some put stress on stillness. But after one has practiced a "still" form, you must carry on some "moving" exercises like Taijiquan or jogging.
- **Gradual Development:** It is vital to realize that one must practice according to the body's ability and strength, allowing it to develop and progress naturally at its own pace, never forcing it or striving anxiously for quick results.
- **Practice Differs According to the Individual:** Since each individual has a different state of health, and illness appears in many forms, the form of Qigong chosen for practice, therefore, shall vary according to the specific needs of each individual.
- **Perseverance:** If one is to be successful in one's practice, one must persevere, practicing daily for several months. Qigong is not like a quick-acting medicine, and the longer one can persevere, the more profound will be the effect.
- **Restraint in One's Private Life:** It is clearly common sense that if the exercises are to be given a chance to help the body, one must give up bad habits such as smoking. One should also restrict excessive drinking and excessive sexual activity, being sure to regulate your life so you do not exhaust yourself.

The above-mentioned eight essential points are fitting for all forms of qigong. When you practice a form of qigong, regardless of the style, you should follow these specific requirements.



# 站樁

## Standing Pole Posture Zhan Zhuang

Chi Kung (Qi Gong) is a Chinese system of exercises for working with the flow of energy in the body. The Chi Kung practitioner learns to build internal strength through breathing exercises and meditation. Wu Chi, the position of primal energy, is a beginning exercise in Chi Kung. It involves training yourself to stand still as a tree rooted in the earth and balanced between earth and sky. This exercise is simple, but powerful, and fundamental to further training.

Stand up in a relaxed manner.

Place your feet at a "comfortable" distance apart & keep the inside of the feet aligned with the inside of the armpits.

Both of your feet should be pointed straight ahead and flat on the floor. Your knees should be bent a couple of centimeters.

You should feel stable, centered, rooted to the earth.

Relax your body (**Sung**: loose, no tension, open, relaxed, calm).

Clear your mind. Set aside your thoughts on the work and worries of the day.

Keep a pleasant look on your face - a soft **gentle smile** is beneficial.

Keep your head up and look forward, gently lift the crown of your head up and slightly tuck your chin in.

Your eyes should be open, with a soft and wide angle focus.

Use the method of looking/seeing called *ping shi* or "level gaze."

Breathe in and out in a relaxed, easy, and regular manner. Breathe deeply and exhale fully. Breathing should be natural, relaxed, and not requiring your attention. Keep your tongue lightly touching the roof of your mouth. Your arms should hang down in a relaxed manner at your sides. The palms of the hands should face the thighs and not touch them. Relax the shoulders and let them hang down. Tilt your pelvic girdle up just enough so your coccyx is not curved outward, be sure not to force or overdue this alignment. Start with standing for 5 minutes and gradually build up to 20 minutes per day.

**As you stand still, allow your head to hang as if suspended from the sky. Let your body align with the earth. Your weight rests in the middle of the soles of your feet. Stand as if you were a tree with its roots deep in the soil. Feel the energy of the earth. Feel the life in the elements around you. Feel the air. Sense the light. Become aligned with and a part of the earth and sky. Allow yourself to be still. Remember to breathe and relax.**

"Standing Meditation is the single most important and widely practiced form of Qi Gong, integrating all elements of posture, relaxation, and breathing previously described. It is a way of developing better alignment and balance, stronger legs and waist, deeper respiration, accurate body awareness, and a tranquil mind."

- Kenneth S. Cohen, *The Way of Qigong*

