

How Qigong Works



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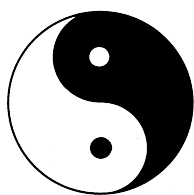
How Chi Kung Overcomes So Called Incurable Illness

What is Chi Kung?

Chi Kung (or Qigong as it is also spelt) is the art of deliberately managing your vital energy. Vital energy is the force that enables you and everyone else to be alive. It is easier to learn than Tai Chi and less strenuous than Yoga. Chi Kung usually combines simple external body movements with gentle breathing methods and is performed in a meditative state of mind. It is the oldest of the 5 branches of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), practiced by millions of people daily worldwide and has a written record going back 5000 years. It requires zero athleticism or investment in equipment. If you can spare 10-15 minutes a day, you can practice this art. In case you were wondering Chi Kung and Qigong are different spellings of the same thing.

There is Only 1 Illness!

In order to easily understand how Chi Kung overcomes pain and illness we first need to look at 2 very important concepts of TCM. Before we begin it is vital to keep in mind that TCM is a very different approach to health and well being than western medical philosophy.



Yin Yang Theory - I'm sure you recognise this symbol and have heard of Yin and Yang. You cannot go to the shops and buy a bag of Yin or a kilo of Yang. They are just symbols and it is important to know right from the start that nothing is completely Yin or completely Yang. Yin Yang theory is a theory of relativity. At its simplest something is either Yin or Yang when in relationship to something else. For example in a relationship between a boy and a girl, the boy is more Yang (male) compared with the girl who more is Yin (female). But if we take a different relationship say between a boy and a man the boy is more Yin compared with the man who is more Yang. Yin and Yang can be used in all relationships. For example: Front/back, night/day, slow/fast, chronic/acute etc. So remember:

Something is only Yin or Yang in relationship to something else.

In TCM, we use Yin and Yang to describe contrasting characteristics that are relative to each other.

When we look at health we use Yin to represent our body's natural ability to respond to our constantly changing environment and Yang to represent all the factors that may cause illness.

In TCM there is only one illness and that is Yin Yang disharmony. Or put another way it means our body has failed in its natural ability to respond appropriately to disease causing agents. Fortunately **Good Health Is Your Birthright** and Yin Yang disharmony is unnatural. The great news is that:

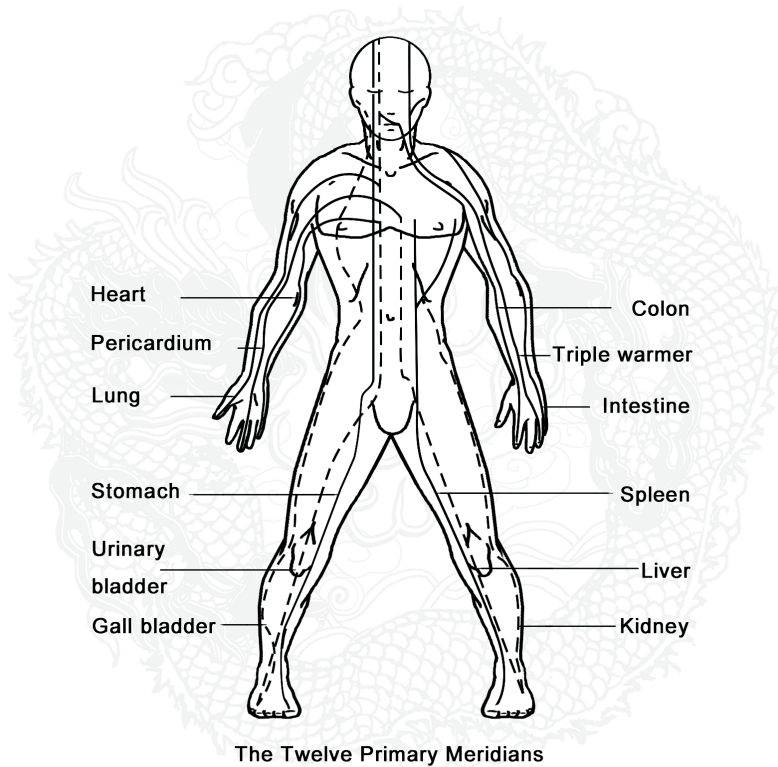
From the TCM view of medicine there is no such thing as an incurable disease!

If we can restore the balance between Yin and Yang we will restore health. However if an illness has been left untreated for too long it may not be possible to fully restore Yin Yang Harmony.

Meridians – Chi/Qi (or energy) flows throughout the body along streams called meridians. Like a stream the flow may be just a trickle or it may be a strong river.

There are 12 primary and 8 secondary meridians. The primary meridians flow through internal organs and the secondary ones do not. When your energy (or Chi or Qi) flows harmoniously through the meridians you have good health (or Yin Yang harmony). When blockages to the flow occur they reduce the flow of energy. These blockages can lead to pain, disease or illness. If the blockage is severe enough to stop the flow of energy completely death quickly follows.

An amazing quality of Chi Kung is that we don't need to know where a blockage is in order to get rid of it. When Chi Kung is practiced correctly it generates a flow of energy (or Chi/Qi) through the body. Because Chi will naturally always flow to any area of low energy (which is also where the blockage is) we can overcome illness often before we are even aware of it!



However, if we have a specific illness, say depression that we know can be caused by blockages in the Heart meridian then we can choose specific Chi Kung patterns that are known to stimulate the Heart meridian and thereby speed up our recovery from depression.

Blockages to energy flow can occur in 4 different ways:

- 1) **Physical** – if you accidentally cut yourself or fall over this may cause a physical blockage to the flow of energy around your body. Neither of these examples will be too severe, unlike a car crash that may cause severe physical blockage to the flow of energy through the meridians.
- 2) **Emotional** – if you have been suffering from a lot of stress over a sustained period of time this will cause emotional blockages, other emotional factors to consider include regular and prolonged exposure to fear, anxiety and worry.

- 3) **Mental** – I remember when I first learnt this one. I simply couldn't believe it, but from my own experience I have discovered it to be true. The number one cause of mental blockages is: Thinking too much! That's right; thinking *too* much is bad for your health.
- 4) **Spiritual** – the most obvious example of a spiritual blockage is depression. Depression crushes the human spirit and affects you physically, emotionally and mentally.

In practice, blockages do not occur in isolation. I.e. an event occurs and causes an emotional blockage only. More common is that an event will affect you in a number of different ways and have an effect on one or more of the four aspects listed above. This happens because they are all interdependent. The four definitions are given in isolation to aid our understanding of how Chi Kung works.

The forte of Chi Kung is two fold:

- 1) It **removes blockages** to the harmonious flow of energy through the meridians of your body thus restoring Yin Yang Harmony. Whether these blockages are physical, emotional, mental or spiritual in origin makes little difference to the effectiveness of Chi Kung.
- 2) Once energy blockages are removed, Chi Kung can then **increase the flow of energy** through the meridians promoting vitality and longevity.

I would like to mention at this point that it is vital you start removing any blockages before increasing the flow of energy. It is a very common misconception that increasing energy flow is the key to overcoming pain and illness and promoting health and well being. But this is rarely the case.

An example will help show why. Imagine a hose pipe full of knots and tangles, turn the tap on slightly and a small trickle may come out of the other end of the pipe, but if you increase the pressure by turning the tap on full, the water will not be able to flow through the pipe quickly enough and you will get

problems: a burst hose, damage to the tap, water backing up etc. If you straighten out the hose beforehand, you avoid this problem.

This is not the greatest example because meridians are not like a hose pipe in that they don't have a fixed boundary. So you don't need to worry about them exploding! But I hope you get the idea.

Remember: Repair then Build!

There's More Than One Way To Look At It

Now it's important you realise that I'm not against Western Medicine. TCM and Western medicine simply look at health using a different model. Remember a model is just a way of looking at the same things and events. It is not a set of facts.

Using the Western medical model to look at a person with high blood pressure, we view him as having too much cholesterol choking his blood vessels.

Using the TCM model and looking at exactly the same person in exactly the same situation, we view him as having Yin Yang disharmony.

The question of which paradigm is correct is not very useful, because both are correct in their own way. A better question is which paradigm helps to overcome the immediate problems? The Shaolin Wahnam Institute has used the TCM model successfully in helping many people to overcome so called incurable diseases. But in an immediate situation, like in a car accident, the Western medical paradigm may be more effective.

Chi Kung healing views a human as being made up of 3 parts:

1. **Jing** (physical body)
2. **Chi** (energy)
3. **Shen** (Spirit).

Depression for example is a Yin Yang disharmony of the Spirit (Shen). A disorder of the Spirit will also affect energy (Chi) and the physical body (Jing).

There are many different ways to cure illness. Western medicine and Chi Kung healing are only two of these many ways. Western medicine is usually **thematic** whereas Chi Kung healing can be **thematic** and **holistic**.

Taking medical drugs to manage depression is a thematic approach. It is thematic because it does not improve the health of the patient as a whole person, it addresses his particular problem. If he has a stomach problem later, he would need a different treatment.

In Chi Kung healing, the approach can be thematic or holistic. By performing a specific Chi Kung exercises, he can overcome depression.

But he will need a different exercise to overcome a stomach problem. In such cases, this approach is thematic. This approach is used when the healer wants to emphasize a particular purpose in the healing.

But Chi Kung healing can also be holistic in that it doesn't just treat the presenting problem, it treats the root cause. In fact Chi Kung healing is usually holistic.

An excellent example of holistic healing is self-manifested chi flow (a wonderful exercise for curing illness). It does not matter what the illness is, the chi flow will eventually overcome the illness as well as other illnesses the healer and the patient may not even be aware of.

It is interesting to note that in China the Western paradigm and the TCM paradigm are used together. It is not unusual for a person who has undergone an operation to receive acupuncture, be given herbs or Chi Kung exercises to help them to recover quickly and heal completely.

Remember: It's not a question of which is best; it's a question of which approach addresses the immediate needs.

And There's More...

Chi Kung has more to offer a regular practitioner than just overcoming pain and illness and improving health. When we *remove blockages* to the harmonious flow of energy in our meridians and then *increase that flow of energy*, we now have more **vitality** to enjoy every aspect of our lives and increase the pleasure we get from our work and play.

Having a harmonious flow of energy through our internal organs keeps our organs in peak condition and will allow us to live to **a ripe old age**. The practice of Chi Kung also brings with it **Spiritual Insights**. You can gain insights into universal reality that confirm there really is more to life than this.

I'd like to emphasise that **Spiritual does not mean Religious**. A person of any religious faith can practice and receive the benefits of Chi Kung.

Chi Kung is non-religious. By spiritual I mean being in touch with who you really are, the deepest part of you. Everyone has a spiritual life, a spiritual journey. If you are involved with a specific religion then that might be spiritual for you. If you're not religious then anything that gets you in touch with your inner self e.g. quiet time, meditation, listening to music, reading great books, might be spiritual for you. This part of your life can only be defined by you.

Our spirituality is so important to our health and wellbeing, but it's often the most neglected.

Not All Chi Kung Is The Same!

You need to know what to look out for when choosing a Chi Kung class because there are three levels of Chi Kung taught today:

- **Low level** Chi Kung. This is where only the form is practiced. Strictly speaking this is not even Chi Kung, it is Chi Kung form. Unfortunately it is the level at which the vast majority of Chi Kung in the world is practiced today.

The benefits you get are minimal and less effective than traditional Western exercises like swimming, running or working out in the gym. This level of Chi Kung will not help you to overcome pain and illness, it will not improve your health, increase your vitality, promote longevity, enhance mental clarity or give you glimpses of cosmic reality.

- **Middle level** Chi Kung is where a practitioner actively seeks to influence his energy flow, by removing energy blockages and increasing energy flow. This is the minimum level you want to be practicing Chi Kung at if you wish to gain all of the benefits I mentioned earlier.
- **High level** Chi Kung is where the mind is used and has always been very rare. Here a practitioner enters into a higher state of consciousness called a “Chi Kung State of Mind” and is able to directly manipulate energy the way they want, such as tapping energy from the cosmos, channelling energy to various parts of their body or being able to transmit energy to people in other countries to speed up their healing!

Different Types Of Chi Kung

Any attempt to classify the different types of Chi Kung is going to fall short of the mark. There are literally hundreds of different types of Chi Kung and I could write a big, thick book on this subject alone.

For the purpose of this report I have stuck to some of the more common types of Chi Kung you are likely to encounter. It is useful to bear in mind that regardless of the different types of Chi Kung – they all aim to promote physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health.

- **Self-Manifested Chi Flow** – sometimes known as medicinal Chi Kung and one of the lowest forms of Chi Kung. But don't make the mistake of thinking that this means it is not worth your consideration. If you suffer from pain and illness this type of Chi Kung will be of great interest and value to you.

SMCF uses external movements to generate energy flow and usually consists of three or more different Chi Kung patterns performed at a much greater speed than normal. The breathing is spontaneous and definitely not co-ordinate with the movements! But the exercises are still performed in a meditative state of mind.

Because more than one pattern is involved more of the bodies meridians are stimulated and the resulting chi flow is characteristically quite vigorous. This vigorous chi flow is excellent for overcoming illness.

- **Dynamic Chi Kung** – This type of Chi Kung is characterised by external movements, co-ordinated with the breathing performed in a meditative state of mind.

It is very *safe* and very *powerful*.

Safe because it consists of more than one “move” so if you perform one part of the form wrong, all is not lost. In fact I remember once seeing a student performing what I think was Lifting the Sky so badly (from the form perspective) that I couldn’t be sure what pattern was she was performing - but she still managed to have a very good Chi flow afterwards!

Powerful because depending on your state of development it can be used to overcome pain and illness, increase vitality, promote mental clarity, develop internal force for martial arts and for those who are ready it can be used for spiritual cultivation.

This type of Chi Kung uses the breath to generate a gentler, deeper “induced chi flow” – but it is not the art of breathing!

- **Zhan Zhuang** – also known as stance practice. This type of Chi Kung is excellent for building internal force and developing mental clarity. A practitioner of Zhan Zhuang remains in one pattern for “some time”. Some time can range from one minute to one hour depending on their development.

It is the crystallisation of generations of past masters. They have concentrated the form down to just one static pattern. The downside of this is that if you get the pattern wrong, you get it all wrong! And unlike practicing a dynamic Chi Kung pattern, you will get no results.

Many students who practice this type of Chi Kung do not realise that Zhan Zhuang is an exercise in relaxation – not endurance! In fact one of the most common causes of deviation in this exercise is being tense. Performing Zhan Zhuang incorrectly can result in very harmful side effects and therefore it is important to learn this type of Chi Kung from a master or competent instructor and not from a book!

Some famous patterns commonly used in Zhan Zhuang are Horse Riding Stance, Golden Bridge, Three Circle Stance, Embracing the Cosmos and Three Treasure Stance.

- **Advanced Chi Kung** – This type of Chi Kung commonly uses the mind to move energy around the body for example The Small Universe. I consider it impossible to learn from a book, or from a video or DVD. This type of Chi Kung must be learned directly from a master.

Key Message

My aim with this article has been to help you understand how and why Chi Kung works, the benefits that it brings, what to look out for when choosing a Chi Kung class and to give you a snapshot of the most common types of chi kung you are likely to encounter. What I would *really* like you to remember from this article is this:

You CAN take back the responsibility for:

- **Your Health**
- **Your Vitality**
- **Your Happiness**
- **Your Longevity**
- **Your Spirituality**

Through the practice of high level Chi Kung.



Marcus Santer is the founder and chief instructor at Qigong15. He teaches Shaolin Chi Kung and is Author of **Shaolin Chi Kung – 18 Exercises To Help You Live A Longer Healthier And Happier Life**. You can download the first 20 pages for free at: www.shaolinchikungbook.com