

Four Seasons Qigong -- All-Season for Triple Burner

1. Both Hands to Hold the Heavens Interlock fingers, lift hands over head pushing palms up, do not tense muscles because it will constrict the body and prevent you from stretching. Mentally tell the body to relax and try to stretch further. Stretch for 10 seconds. Twist your upper body to one side to twist the trunk muscles. Stay there for 5 seconds. Repeat to alternate sides for a total of 3 repetitions to each side. Tilt the body to one side and stay there for five seconds. Repeat three times to each side. Bend forward gently until fingers touch floor. Use the pelvis to wave the hips from side to side to loosen up the lower spine. Do this for 10 seconds. Squat down with your feet flat on the floor to stretch your ankles. Then lift up the heels to stretch the toes. Repeat the entire exercise three times.

Points to watch: Do not hold your breath. How far you should stretch depends on your feeling. Proceed cautiously and gently, push a little farther each time. Try to progress, but without feeling uncomfortable pain.

2. Large Dragon Loosens its Neck To stretch front neck muscles, turn your head slightly backwards diagonally while pressing your shoulder backwards. Start the stretch gently for 20 seconds then shift to focus on the rear neck muscles. Press your head downward and to the side. After stretching each of the four muscles, repeat from the beginning, this time for 30 seconds. Repeat entire exercise a third time.

3. Buddha Explores the Sea Tilt the head forward so that it is parallel to the floor and the four neck muscles are evenly stretched. Gently push both shoulders back if you wish to accentuate the stretch. Do this for 20 seconds then slowly turn the head from side to side while keeping it parallel to the floor. Repeat this turning twice more. Then gently circle the neck in a small radius 10 times in each direction. Do not enlarge the circles as this can damage the neck.

4. Circle the Waist Horizontally In a moderate horse stance, circle the abdomen horizontally trying not to move the thighs or upper body. Holding one hand on the Dan Tien and the other on the Mingmen can help you focus the exercise.

5. Waving the Spine and Massaging the Internal Organs Create a wave-like motion up the spine to the diaphragm. Putting one hand on the solar plexus and keeping the other on the Dan Tien may help you feel this movement. Feel that your spine is moving like a soft, slow whip. Try to feel the vertebrae moving section by section. Repeat 10 times. Slowly turn the body to one side and then the other. Repeat 10 times.

6. Thrust the Chest and Arc the Chest Extend the wave-like movement up to your chest. Hold one hand on the Dan Tien and one lightly at the throat to help you feel the movements. Coordinate your breath with the movement of your shoulders, breathing in when your shoulders are back and breathing out when they are forward. Try to move your spine so that you feel the movement section by section. Repeat the movements 10 times, then continue the movements as you slowly turn the body to one side and then the other.

7. White Crane Loosens Its Wings Extend the motion to your arms and fingers. Feel that this motion is now being generated in your legs and waist, being directed by your hips, and finally being manifested by the hands and arms. You should feel that your whole body is connected from feet to finger tips. Place your mental focus inside your body, moving just ahead of the wave-like motion and imagine that your mind is leading your Qi in synch with the motion from your Dan Tien, up the spine, across the shoulders, and down your arms to reach slightly beyond your finger tips. Repeat the movements 10 times. At this stage you are employing the three essential elements of qigong exercise—body, breath, and mind.

8. White Crane Shakes Its Wings Perform the movements with one arm at a time, twisting the body slightly to direct the arm movements. Repeat 10 times with each arm.