

The Four Seasons Medical Qigong Teacher's Guide

Introduction

The Four Seasons Qigong helps the body evenly adjust its internal energy from one season to another. This adjustment has become more difficult in the modern age where most people's life style is very isolated from nature. To prepare for the transition from season, start working on the upcoming season during the last month of the current season.

The Four Seasons Medical Qigong set consists of four parts – the Spring, Summer and Fall, and Winter routines, and the year-round, All-Season Triple Warmer routine.

Practice the Four Seasons Qigong daily. Do the routine for the current season, and during the last month of the current season, add the routine for the upcoming season. Perform the Triple Warmer routine all year long. It is excellent for promoting spinal health and is a key part of Dr. Yang Jwing Ming's qigong program for relieving back pain.

General Theory of the Four Seasons Qigong.

Changes in the seasons affect the Qi, the organs, the emotional mind, and the spirit in different ways. The Four Seasons exercises are designed to help adjust and balance the Qi to harmonize the body with the seasonal changes.

Spring: The body changes from extreme Yin to Yang. The Yin organ, the Liver, is in a Yin state and needs to change into Yang. The body's Guardian Qi, which surrounds the body and protects it from disease, starts to grow. The spirit is raised. Emotions start to rise. Use deep breathing to help maintain a peaceful mind. You can use Reverse Abdominal Breathing with exhalation longer than inhalation. Massage the Liver and the Liver channel.

Summer: The body changes from weak Yang to extreme Yang. The Heart is the Yin organ, but its Yin lessens during summer and emotional excitement grows. Excessive emotion can make the Heart too Yang. The body's Guardian Qi grows strong to release excess Qi from the internal organs. The main purpose of the summer exercises is to keep the Heart in the proper Yin state. You can use Normal Abdominal Breathing with inhalation longer than exhalation to maintain a peaceful mind and lead excess Qi away from the Heart into the Lungs. Massage the Heart from the center outward and the Heart and Pericardium channels. Keep the mind away from the Heart (Remember, the Qi flows where the mind leads it).

Fall: The body changes from extreme Yang to Yin. The seasonal Yin organ, the Lungs, are the first organs to experience with autumnal changes, and their condition may already be aggravated by late summer pollen. This can change the Lungs from greater Yin to lesser Yin. To maintain the proper Yin state, drink more water. Use Reverse Abdominal Breathing to lead the Qi from the internal organs to the skin to strengthen Guardian Qi. Massage the chest from the center outward and massage the Lung channel.

Winter: The body changes from weak Yin to extreme Yin. Qi deficiency occurs in the Kidneys. Guardian Qi shrinks from to the center of the body. The spirit sinks and depression increases. Use Reverse Abdominal Breathing with exhalation longer than inhalation to expand and strengthen the Guardian Qi. Focus the mind on raising the spirit and being more physically active. Massage the ears, Kidneys, and the Yongquan cavities (K-1, Bubbling Wells).

The exercises can be combined with the Six Healing Sounds Qigong. The sound of course is made during exhalation and usually done when the organ is being relaxed after being stretched. Using the sounds enhances the releasing effect of the exercise. The sounds should not be used if the organ is weak or deficient in Qi and needs to be nourished. As you gain experience in using the sounds, work toward making the “sound of no sound,” which is like a runner panting. The sounds should be very small because big sounds trap Qi in the throat. The sounds for the corresponding organs are:

Heart	He (heh, like a dog’s pant)
Spleen	Hu (who)
Lungs	Si (tseh like air leaking from a balloon)
Triple Burner	Xi (shee)
Liver	Xu (shuu)
Kidneys	Chui (pronounced cheway)

All-Season Routine for Triple Burner

The All-Season routine is the most important because it regulates the major portion of the body, keeps the torso open, and prevents energy from becoming trapped there, which can damage the internal organs and cause other problems.

- The All-Season routine for TB also benefits the Pericardium and thus the heart. The Triple Burner (TB) and the Pericardium (PC) meridians correspond. When energy is released from the TB (torso) the PC does not have to work as hard to prevent the heart from becoming too Yang. This is important year round.
- The torso is supported by two big sets of muscles in your back. If these muscles are weak, they will not properly support the vertebrae, discs will become narrow, and kidney energy will become trapped. Trapping of kidney energy will in turn cause problems with the liver and then the heart. You have to move the spine, as in the All-Season routine, to keep the back muscles strong and relaxed and prevent problems with the vertebrae and discs.
- Working to strengthen the torso is always the first step to restoring a person's central energy system.

You will notice that this routine has two exercises for the neck – Large Dragon Loosens Its Neck and Buddha Explores the Sea. As we also see in the Eight Pieces Brocade, it is very important to pay attention to the neck to keep the muscles loose and relaxed so that blood and Qi can flow freely to the brain. Working the neck is the first step in slowing down aging.

The spinal movements in this routine help keep the spine relaxed and the discs lubricated. In modern times we use the spine much less than in ancient times. When we don't use the spine, it stiffens and discs dry out causing back ache and other problems.

1. Both Hands to Hold the Heavens (Shuang Shou Tuo Tian)

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 10-30 seconds. ¹Twist your upper body to one side to twist the trunk muscles. Turn the head to look behind you to stretch the neck. Stay there for at least five seconds and up to 30 seconds if you have time. Repeat to alternate sides for a total of 3 repetitions to each side. Tilt the body to one side and stay there for five to 30 seconds. Loosen the muscles when you bend to the side, do not tighten them. Repeat three times to each side. You can make the Xi sound for TW when you lower your arms between each set of repetitions. Use the mind to feel the torso relaxing when you make the sound. Bend forward gently until fingers touch floor. Use the pelvis to wave the hips from side to side to loosen up the lower

¹ Although Two Hands Hold the Heavens is derived from the Eight Pieces Brocade Exercise, it is not identical. In the Eight Pieces Brocade, the toes press down to raise the heels. This leads the energy downward, while lifting the hands above the head leads energy upward, thus smoothing out the whole body's energy in between. Since we are concentrating just on the torso in the All-Season routine, rather than the whole body, we don't have to raise the heels.

spine. Do this for 10 seconds. Squat down with your feet flat on the floor to stretch your ankles and Achilles tendons. 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. Students should exhale as they twist to the side and bend to the side, but remind them to continue deep breathing while they hold the twists and the bends. Do not hold the breath. Students should inhale when returning to the center position.

Advanced students who have good balance can place the feet close together and close their eyes as they do this exercise. This is an excellent means of training one's sense of central equilibrium. Sounds: Make the sound of the Triple Burner (tseh) when bending to the sides.)

2. Large Dragon Loosens its Neck (Da Long Shen Jing).

Goal is to stretch the four large muscles of the 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 three to five times.

3. Buddha Explores the Sea (Na Zha Tan Hai)

Goal is to stretch the ligaments of the neck. 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 (Pin Yuan Niu Yao)

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 Ming men can help you focus the exercise. The Qi can flow easily only when the abdomen is loose and relaxed. Do not stick the butt out as this will tense the back muscles. Maintain the torso upright. This exercise works Lumbar vertebrae 1-4. Turn the circles to the right and then to the left. Then reverse the direction of rotation. After circling in the center position turn again to the right and left.

5. Regulate the Middle and Lower Burners (Tiao Zhong Xia Jiao) [Waving the Spine and Massaging the Internal Organs (Ji Zhui Bo Dong, Nei Zang An Mo)]

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. Loosening the Upper Burner (Song Chi Shang Jiao) [Thrust the Chest and Arc the Chest [Tan Xiong Gong Bei]

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, and then continue the movements as you slowly turn the body to one side and then the other.

This exercise is especially important for women to exercise the muscles of the chest and prevent energy from becoming trapped there, which can lead to problems such as breast cancer. It helps open the junction between the chest and shoulders, which is located in the area of Lung 1, and allows the Qi to flow from the chest into the arms. The exercise also exercises the muscles around the lungs, and the effect is enhanced when you turn to the sides. Sounds: Make the Xu sound for the liver when turning to the right and the Hu sound for the spleen when turning to the left.

7. White Crane Loosens Its Wings (Bai He Dou Chi)

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.

Since the previous exercises have loosened the torso, this one helps lead the energy from the torso to the arms. You should notice a comfortable feeling of static electricity accumulating on the skin of the arms as you lead the Qi out.

8. White Crane Shakes Its Wings (Bai He Dou Chi)

Perform the movements with one arm at a time, twisting the body slightly to direct the arm movements. Repeat 6-10 times with each arm. Twist the joints loosely, section by section. This is a recovery form. It should be very relaxed.

When you complete these exercises, you should feel that every joint and muscle in your body from waist to fingers is relaxed and loose. The relaxation of joints and muscles is essential to the movement of Qi and is the foundation for the manifestation of Jin power in Taiji.

Reference: *The Essence of Taiji Qigong*, pp. 56-63. Understanding Qigong; Four Seasons Qigong, Qigong in-Depth DVD 4.

Four Seasons Qigong—Spring

The Liver is the Yin organ, the Gall Bladder is the Yang organ. The body's Guardian Qi starts to grow. Spirit is raised. The mind starts becoming more active.

1. **Left-Right Single Lifting of Hands.** (From the Eight Pieces of Brocade)

With feet shoulder width apart, bring your hands in front of your chest, palms facing toward you. Inhale. Then while exhaling, extend one arm up and turn the palm toward the sky. At the same time, lower your other arm down and turn the palm toward the earth. Your palms should feel like they are pushing against resistance, but not so much that your muscles tense. While inhaling, return to the starting position with arms crossed in front of your chest and palms facing you. While exhaling, repeat the movements, now raising and lowering the opposite hands. You can make the liver sound as the right arm descends and the spleen sound as your left arm descends.

2. **White Ape Plucks the Peach.**

Maintain the same stance as in the first exercise. Hold your hands in front of your waist with your palms facing each other, right hand on top. While inhaling, turn your body to your left. While exhaling, circle your right arm up, over your head, and down to your right side at waist level with palm facing up. At the same time, turn your body to your right and move your left hand to your right side, keeping it at waist level but turning your palm to face upward during the movement. Now you should be standing with your torso turned to your right and your palms facing each other on your right side with your left hand on top. Inhale. Then while exhaling, repeat the exercise in the opposite direction with your left arm circling up, over the head, and down to your left side.

3. **Lo Han Bows.**

Stand with feet hip width apart. While exhaling, turn your right hand palm up and press your right forearm into your abdomen just below your rib cage. At the same time, raise your left hand over your head with the palm facing the sky. Bend to your right side while using your forearm to squeeze and massage the area of your liver and your left arm to accentuate the bend. While inhaling, return your body to the center position. Then while exhaling, repeat the exercise to the opposite side.

4. **Zhong Wan Up and Down** (or Yum Yum)

Zhong Wan refers to Conception Vessel #12, which is in the top center of the path followed in this exercise.

(Two Parts) Part 1. Cup your hands one atop the other, palms facing up. Now massage your abdomen between your rib cage and your pelvic bone with your cupped hands pressing them in a scooping-like motion in, up, and out. Work them up your right side across you middle and down your left side (counterclockwise and in the direction your large intestine flows). Part 2. Place

one hand atop the other and massage your abdomen with the flat surface of your palm in the same direction as described in part 1.

Four Seasons Qigong—Summer and Fall

Theory

In summer the Heart is the Yin organ, the Yang organ is the Small Intestine. In fall the climatic condition is dryness, the Yin organ is the Lungs and the Yang organ is the Large Intestine. In summer the mind is very active, but in fall, the mind starts to become depressed.

The Summer routine for the heart and the Fall routine for the lungs are often grouped together because the lungs can be used to regulate the heart. (Lung metal cools heart fire according to the Five Element Theory). Also the organs' close proximity to each other in the center of the chest means that the exercises work on the combined area surrounding the heart and lungs. In addition, the routine, with some modification, can be used to help prevent breast cancer. The breathing patterns, however, are different for each of the variations summer, fall, and prevention of breast cancer. When combining the exercises with The Six Healing Sounds, the sound for the heart is he (sounds like a dog panting) and the sound for the lungs is si (sounds like air leaking from a balloon or a tire).

Summer: Although the summer exercises target the heart, we do not keep the mind focused on the heart during the exercises. The heart's normal state is yang. Since the Qi flows where the mind leads it, focusing the mind on the heart will lead Qi there causing the organ to become even more yang. Instead, when we perform the releasing part of the summer exercises we want only to start the mind in the heart very briefly and then move the mind focus to the flow of Qi out the heart meridian, placing the mind beyond the tips of the fingers.

When energy is trapped in the muscles of the limbs and torso during summer, the Qi flow through the meridians becomes constricted, preventing the Qi from circulating freely through the organ meridians and causing the organs to become too yang.

There are two ways to relieve the problem of energy becoming trapped. One is by sweating, which is the natural way. The other way is to lead the Qi inward to nourish the bone marrow. Chinese practice bone marrow washing beginning in the spring and more intensively in summer. Practice intensifies in summer because the body needs less of an insulating layer of Guardian Qi in summer. One leads the Qi inward to the bone marrow by inhaling longer than exhaling, focusing the mind on the inhalation and simply relaxing the mind during exhalation. Reverse Abdominal Breathing enhances the efficiency of this practice. One can also add the Hen sound, which leads the Qi inward. Stop this practice in the fall.

Fall: One of the purposes of the fall exercises is to increase the ability of the lungs to regulate the heart's energy state. To do this, we try to increase the lungs' efficiency by increasing their ability to take in oxygen. The front side of the lungs is usually yang because the bronchial tubes are located there and this side is worked the most during normal breathing. Change the position of the arms, shoulders, and torso during the exercise to change the part of the lungs being used during breathing.

Exercises

Place feet shoulder width apart except for number 7.

1. **Swing Arms Forward and Backward.** While doing normal abdominal breathing, swing both arms loosely to the front and then to the back making a large arc. Change the angle of the arms out to the sides midway through the exercise to expand the range of the muscles being worked in the chest. Raise the arms to horizontal, but no higher because that will tense the shoulder muscles. It's a good habit to do this exercise for 15-20 minutes when you are watching TV. For the lungs, you can emphasize expanding the chest when you swing your arms backward and hollowing the chest when you swing your arms forward. You can turn the torso to the right and left to work different parts of the lungs. This exercise is important for the prevention of breast cancer. In the breast cancer variation, you can rotate the palms up when you move your arms backward and palms down when you move your arms forward after you change the angle to the sides.
2. **Windlass Turn (like rowing a boat).** This exercise comes from the Sitting Eight Pieces Brocade. Form the fingers and thumb of each hand into the shape of the letter C. Then move the arms and stretch the back in a circular motion like rowing a boat. Repeat the rowing motion in the opposite direction. Open the shoulders when the arms are pulled back. The shoulders are a junction to release energy from the chest. Inhale when pulling the arms in and thrust out the chest. This opens the shoulders and draws air into the back of the lungs because the position of the shoulders relaxes the back side of the lungs and compresses the front side.
3. **Feudal Lord Pulls the Bow.** With hands in front of your face, forearms perpendicular to the ground, inhale while drawing the elbows to each side, stretching the chest and flexing the upper back and shoulder muscles and clenching the fists. While maintaining this extended position, do a full breath cycle (exhale and inhale). Then during exhalation, return to the starting position allowing the fingers to relax and straighten as you go. Feel the Qi flow into the hands and fingers as you unclench them. Change the angle of the upper arms and elbows as you pull the arms back to work different parts of the chest muscles, breasts, and lungs. Bringing the elbows up exercises the upper parts of the lungs. Elbows down, exercises the lower parts of the lungs.

This exercise is often used for breast cancer prevention in China. Pulling the elbows down as you pull the arms back is especially important in breast cancer prevention because 70 percent of breast cancers start in the area of the nipples or above.

4. **Immortal Pushes the Stone Tablet.** Begin with hands in front of the chest. During exhalation, push the left hand forward and sink the wrist as though striking with the edge of the hand. At the same time, move the right elbow backwards creating a strong stretch of the chest and shoulder muscles both forwards and backwards, and turn the head to look in the direction of the right elbow. Inhale while returning the hands to the starting position. Repeat to the opposite side.

5. **Large Roc Arcs Its Wings.** Start with arms hanging down at your sides. While inhaling, raise the hands in front of the chest to shoulder level, turning palms up as you go. Round out the upper back and shoulders, but do not raise the shoulders. While exhaling, arc the arms out to front, turning the palms outward. Inhale while drawing the hands back to the chest and exhale while lowering the arms to the starting position.

6. **Large Roc Spreads Its Wings.** Similar to number 5 but bend the waist and push the arms out at a 45-degree angle to the ground. Round the lower back. Keep the chin down and do not raise the shoulders.

7. **Shake the Head and Sway the Tail.** (From the Eight Pieces of Brocade Qigong Set). Take a wide horse stance. Place each hand above the knee with the thumb pointing outward. Round the back. During exhalation, stretch to the left, shifting 70 to 80 percent of your weight to the left leg, turning the head to look rearward, and pressing down firmly with the left hand on the left leg. While inhaling, return to the starting position. During the next exhalation, repeat the movements to the opposite side.

Four Seasons Qigong—Winter

The climatic condition is extreme cold. The energy environment is extreme Yin. The Yin organ is the kidneys, and the Yang organ the bladder. Effects on the body are: Qi deficiency in kidneys, guardian Qi shrinks to center, the body is chilly, urine increases, the body shrinks, the spirit is lower, depression increases.

1. Two Hands Hold the Toes. (from the Eight Pieces of Brocade Qigong)

With feet shoulder width apart, bring your hands to waist level palms facing up. Raise the hands straight up and overhead, turning the palms to face upward. As you extend your arms over your head, feel as if you are pushing a weight, but do not tense your muscles or lock your joints. Hold this position for three seconds while you focus your mind on your Mingmen cavity. Keeping the arms extended, bend forward at the waist and grab your toes. Pull upward to put a gentle stress on your whole body. While holding your toes, focus your mind on the Bubbling Well cavities. Hold this position for three seconds. Do at least six repetitions.

2. Phoenix Spreads Its Wings

Bend forward from the waist. Grab your left knee with your right hand. Inhale. Then while exhaling, swing your left arm up with the palm facing to your right, and turn your head to look at the upraised arm. Pull gently with the right hand to accentuate the twisting of your waist and torso. While holding this position, perform one breath cycle. Then on the next inhalation, lower the arm and return to a centered position. During the next exhalation, perform the movements to the other side. Repeat at least three times to each side.

3. Turn the Head to See the Moon. (From the Taiji Coiling Set Qigong)

Part 1. While inhaling, turn both palms upward and raise them to chest level. Then while exhaling, move your right hand upward and your left hand downward. As your left hand descends, thread it behind your back and press the palm down. At the same time, push the right palm up, twist your torso to the left side, and turn your head to the left to look behind you. The palms should feel like they are pressing against resistance, but do not tense your muscles. Hold this position for one breath cycle. On the next inhalation, return to the center position, crossing your arms in front of your chest. During the next exhalation, perform the movements to the opposite side. Do at least three repetitions to each side.

Part 2. Perform the same movements with a wider stance and with your torso leaning more to the sides. Do at least three repetitions to each side.

4. Large Bear Softens the Waist

Press your right kidney with the back of your left hand as you perform the Taiji Qigong spinal exercise. Do at least twelve repetitions, then place your right hand on your left kidney and repeat the exercise. Tap both kidneys with the backs of your hands. Then tap the Mingmen, sacrum, and buttocks.