Tai Chi & Qigong for Hypertension

Written By: Master Wing Cheung
Edited & Illustrated By: Marianne Nakamura
Tai Chi and Qigong for Hypertension

The 21st century or information age is marked by technological advances designed to improve our lives. We strive for a better life but are still challenged by major health issues. Modern science has not been able to cure many diseases. Perhaps it is time to consider the Chinese model of health.

While Western medicine primarily seeks to control disease and treat its symptoms, the goal of Traditional Chinese Medicine is to prevent disease and thus avoid damage to the body. Indeed, prevention is the core teaching from the Yellow Emperor's Inner Classic (the foundational text of TCM). To remain healthy, “One should focus on preventing the sickness before it becomes a sickness.”

Western doctors agree that by the time disease manifests, it has been developing unnoticed for some time. It's like a seed buried in the ground waiting for the proper conditions to sprout. It then begins to grow upward and finally breaks the earth’s surface. This is similar to a disease that is growing unnoticed, and the patient is not aware until the symptoms appear. If the seed does not break the surface, it cannot grow into a tree; so the ancient Chinese model treats the root of the problem and seeks to eliminate the cause. The roots are the disruption or imbalance of qi (our life energy) whether by physical blockage or emotional disturbance. We can all recognize how powerfully emotions affect our health.

In this new series, Master Cheung shares the TCM and Daoist approaches to specific health issues. We are empowered to take responsibility for our health. These ancient practices have been developed and refined over 1000’s of years, and have endured the test of time. For the most part, these exercises are super easy. Don’t be fooled into thinking they need to be more complicated to be effective. Let us follow the Dao De Jing, and “Take on difficulties while they are easy”.

~ may you enjoy continued health and well-being ~
Introduction

The first in this health series presents various techniques for addressing hypertension. High blood pressure or hypertension and its attendant diseases are a leading cause of death worldwide. According to the American Heart Association (AHA), nearly half of American adults suffer from it, and the number is expected to grow. These are sobering statistics, yet the good news reports the AHA, is that “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” In Western medicine, prevention includes guidelines for diet, exercise, and lifestyle to mitigate many of the risk factors, but the primary treatment is pharmaceutical control. These medications which are often prescribed for life can have negative side effects. According to the TCM, all medicine is poisonous and should only be taken temporarily. Any medicine taken long term will surely deteriorate the liver and kidneys, and further weaken the body’s ability to recover by itself.

TCM has its roots in Daoism which considers health to be the harmonious interaction of all aspects of one's life, including interaction with our environment. Their science is a holistic approach which integrates mind, body, and spirit. It not only examines the yin-yang relationships within our body system but externally with nature. Generally speaking, the Daoists view health as our inherent state. All disease is considered to be a disturbance of qi by any means, including harmful thoughts and emotions. Rather than focus on healing, they focus on restoring balance and allowing the body to heal naturally. Qi harmony is key to our health, rejuvenation, longevity, and overall success. This concept is quite different from the Western medical model. However, new research in physics garners support for this energy approach to well-being.

Many of my qigong students are able to bring their blood pressure back to normal by simply practicing Tai Chi Qigong Shibashi. In Daoist Neigong and Nei Dan (inner alchemy practices), one’s blood pressure may temporarily rise at some stages and remain high for a period of time. I have included information on lowering blood pressure and on low blood pressure. Even if you do not have hypertension now, you may be predisposed to the condition. These techniques are preventative, so valuable to all.

Disclaimer: This manual provides information on the ancient Chinese approach to health and treatment of disease. This information is not intended as medical advice. Before practicing any of its exercises, it is advised that you do so under the guidance of a qualified medical professional. The Tai Chi Qigong and Feng Shui Institute and author of this material accept no liability for any loss or damage a person suffers because that person has directly or indirectly relied on any information in this manual.
Tai Chi and Qigong for Hypertension / Techniques

Mind/body relaxation is key to effective practice! By relaxing the mind we connect to the energy of the universe and enter Qigong Mode, a positive mental state dominated by low alpha waves. Relaxing the body facilitates the flow of energy. When we straighten our spine and relax, our body expands and creates more space for qi and blood flow. The 1st sentence of the Yellow Emperor’s Inner Classic says, “Blood follows qi”. In the Chinese model, hypertension is mainly due to qi not flowing properly from the head.

Three Lines Relaxation  Click here for the Video Demonstration

Please note: This is a static qigong, no movement; so do not use your hands (as I do in the video).

This visualization is excellent for mind/body relaxation and guides qi away from the head. It is preferable to practice this while sitting or standing, but lying down is also acceptable.

Relax and enter the Qigong Mode by visualizing and really feeling the serenity and comfort of a beautiful, sunny place. See the sunlight and feel its warmth flowing like warm water slowly down your entire body. On a hot day, visualize the sunny spot and feel refreshing water flowing down your entire body. (If you have trouble visualizing, ask a partner to trace the flow with a warm or cool object close to the body from your head and slowly down to the ground.)

1st Line - Feel the sunlight shining on the top of your head and gradually flowing down the front of your body all the way down to the feet. In order to slow its descent, feel the warmth going down each specific area: the top of the head, forehead, eyes, nose, mouth, chin, neck, etc. all the way down to the bottom of the feet.

2nd Line - Again see the sun and feel its warmth on top of your head. This time it divides and flows from the head to ears, neck, shoulders, down both sides of your body; arms to fingertips and simultaneously down the sides of your torso; then legs, and all the way down to the bottom of your feet.

3rd Line - Now the sun shines on top of the head and flows down the back of the body; from the back of the head and neck, down your back and arms, your bottom, the backs of the legs, all the way down to the bottom of the feet.

Finally, visualize the sun above shining over your entire body. Feel warmth streaming down all sides at once from your head, all the way down to the bottom of the feet.

Begin by practicing 5 min. If this is ok, then add a couple minutes each day until you can do this comfortably for 20 minutes at a time. (The longer the better.) Practice at least 2-3 times per day.

If you have abnormally low blood pressure (hypotension), to prevent fainting, only visualize the sun or water flowing down to your chest.
Mastering the Technique

It is most important you master **Three Lines Relaxation** because it, along with **Dan Tian Breathing** (which you'll learn later), benefit all the subsequent techniques. Please spend more time on these two key practices! What does ‘mastering’ means? It means that with just 1 exhalation, one can readily feel the warm sunlight or water come down from the top of the head into the ground and pass through every part of the body without any gaps.

However, this practice should be done with natural breathing. The emphasis is on relaxing and feeling different parts of the body. Your breathing will naturally slow down as your body and mind relax. Forcing your breath to slow down will back-fire and slow progress.

Though this is a simple exercise, it can also be very profound. Many years ago, a friend was so excited to share her incredible experience from a week-long qigong retreat. For the entire week, all she did was Three Lines Relaxation. Yes, something so basic can have amazing results! Practice need not be complicated. What is most vital, is dedication! With regular practice, the exercises will become second nature.

Note:

It is not necessary to do all the following techniques. Just focus on those that you find beneficial. Some students find static exercises easier than moving qigong or vice versa. No matter which you choose, always begin your practice with **Three Lines Relaxation**. Do it at least one time, to prepare the mind and body. E.g., practice the **Three Lines Relaxation** once, before beginning the **Zhi Qiao Fa** or any of the other exercises.