

Simple Chi Kung

Warm Up Exercises



Mantak Chia

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Contents

Simple Chi Kung	1
Bouncing	2
Foot and Hand Kicking	3
Knee Rotations	4
Hips Rotations	5
Sacrum Rotates Back and Forth	6
Standing Crane and Turtle	7
Spinal Cord Breathing	9
Empty Force in Lower, Middle, Upper Parts of the Body	11
Empty Force Practice	12
Upper Stretching and Twisting to Four Sides	13
Look from Side to Side from the Neck	17
Shoulder Rotation with Eyes	18
Shoulders	19
Forearm and Palms Slapping the Organs	21
Hand and Wrist	22
Opening the Door of Life	25
Elephant Swings his Trunk	27
Squatting to Open Sacrum	28
Clench and Tap Teeth	30
Bone Breathing	31

The meditations, practices and techniques described herein are **not** intended to be used as an alternative or substitute for professional medical treatment and care. If any readers are suffering from illnesses based on mental or emotional disorders, an appropriate professional health care practitioner or therapist should be consulted. Such problems should be corrected before you start training. This booklet does not attempt to give any medical diagnosis, treatment, prescription, or remedial recommendation in relation to any human disease, ailment, suffering or physical condition whatsoever.

Simple Chi Kung

Whether one is a student or an expert, practice is essential. A practice session can be fruitless, however, if the body is not properly prepared to handle the energy it is about to absorb. This is the main reason for these additional Iron Shirt training exercises. The term “warm-up” means to begin the Chi and blood flow and invigorate their circulation throughout the body. Warm-up exercises are particularly important for areas of the body that are rarely stretched, such as the spine and the sacrum. Even a person who does weight training and aerobics is still not properly prepared for the conduction of large amounts of energy. Without an adequate warm-up before exercise, the muscles may also be stiff and tight and lack sufficient blood supply to meet the sudden demands placed on them by strenuous activity. This is one major cause of athletic injury.

They are also easy to perform. Listen to the messages from your body as you do the various exercises. Pain is the body’s warning signal that you may be overdoing it. The goal is not to overstretch or to develop large muscles, but to loosen the joints and relax the muscles so that the Chi and blood can flow without obstruction. Don’t force yourself beyond your limits: less is better, especially at the beginning. If you feel any joint pain or discomfort while doing any of the exercises, back off until you feel comfortable. If you still feel strain or pain, discontinue the exercise all together.

Be especially respectful of any injuries, chronic problems, or physical limitations you may have. If you are kind and gentle to your body, it will start to trust you and relax by itself. You will find yourself starting to loosen on a deeper level without having to force the issue. In this way, you will develop naturally, gradually, and safely. In Iron Shirt Chi Kung, you learn to reorganize the structure of your body in the way you are standing, sitting or moving. In particular, you discover how to use the power of the Lower Tan Tien, the perineum and the spine to stand in a strong, stable, integrated way. You will see that many warm-up movements focus on training the waist for this reason.

Bouncing

Bouncing the body can be compared to a brief ride on the subway. For those of you who commute, this can be practiced on the way to work as well.

1. Just relax the body while concentrating on opening the joints, and bounce on the floor without any tension.

2. Let the vibration in the heels work its way up through the entire skeletal system: from the legs to the spine to the neck to the skull. Shoulders and arms should vibrate as they hang loosely by the sides of the body. To enhance this, you can hum a vowel to hear the vibration make the voice tremble as well.

3. Rest and feel the Chi entering the joints.



Fig. 1 Shake all the joints loose and feel them open.

Foot and Hand Kicking

Draw out your leg and opposite arm and kick out letting go of any tension, pain and stress (30 to 60 times); then do the opposite leg and arm.



Fig. 2 Foot and Hand Kicking

Knee Rotations

Standing with feet together, hands on your knees, knees flexed, rotate both knees together, exercising your ankles and knees with clockwise/counterclockwise rotations.

1. Place the feet together. Bend the knees and place the palms lightly on the kneecaps.
2. Slowly and gently rotate the knees to the left.
3. Rotate the knees to the back.
4. Rotate the knees to the right.
5. Repeat steps 2 and 4 eight more times.
6. Now reverse direction and repeat nine times.



Fig. 3 Knee Rotations

Hip Rotations

1. Stand with the feet parallel and slightly wider than shoulder width apart. Place the hands on the sides of the waist. As you perform the hip rotations, keep the head above the feet. Move slowly and easily, breathing deeply and continuously.

2. Bring the hips forward.

3. Move the hips in a large clockwise circle.

4. Now move the hips in a circle to the back.

5. Move the hips counterclockwise.

6. Repeat steps 2-5 eight more times.

7. Reverse the direction and repeat steps 2-5 nine times.



Fig. 4 Hip Rotations

Sacrum Rotates Back and Forth

Rotating the sacrum is an excellent exercise to open the lower back and activate the spinal cord. Place one hand over the sacrum and the other over the pubic bone. Rotate the sacrum in a circle, 36 times in each direction. This movement activates the sacral pump.



Fig. 5 Sacrum Rotates Back and Forth

Standing Crane and Turtle

Stand with feet apart and draw your head out in front of you with your chin extended out and your palms on your knees.

Draw your chin into your body moving your spine. Do the Crane Exercise nine to eighteen times and reverse curving your lower back nine to eighteen times with the Turtle Exercise.



Fig. 6 Standing Crane and Turtle

Standing Crane



Fig. 7 Standing Crane

Spinal Cord Breathing

Inhale and expand the chest, arms bent at the elbows and extended to the sides of the body. Exhale, tuck the tailbone under and round the back forward, bringing the elbows toward one another in front of the chest. Inhale, expand the chest, tuck the chin in toward the throat, push the chin back, raise the crown and bring the arms out to the sides. Repeat this back and forth movement 36 times. This movement activates the cranial and sacral pumps, and loosens all the joints in the spine.

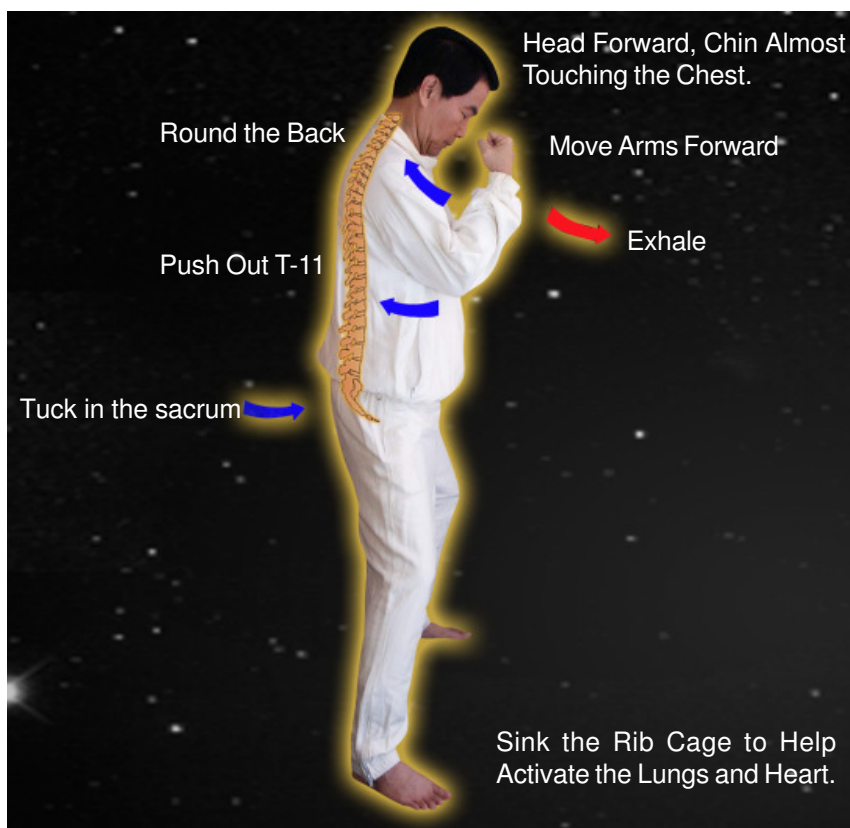


Fig. 8 *Spinal Cord Breathing*



Fig. 9 *Spinal Cord Breathing*

Empty Force in Lower, Middle, Upper Parts of the Body

Breathe in the three abdominal areas (Lower, Middle and Upper) and exhale deeply out with mouth open. Breathe in deeply and exhale, sticking the tongue out and curling it under with the movement of the lower abdominal area emptying any further air out of the body. (Optional: Men: Pull your genitals down at the same time as you breathe and Women: Use a string and jade egg).

Do the same procedure for the Middle and Upper abdominal areas, then move the tongue and abdomen in a circular motion and reverse continually emptying the body out of any air.



Fig. 10 Empty Force in Lower, Middle, Upper Parts of the Body

Empty Force Practice



Fig. 11 Empty Force Practice pulling the Genitals down

Upper Stretching and Twisting to Four Sides

Raise hands above head and stretch as far as you can reach, moving up on your toes. Grab your elbows, moving down on your feet and lean to each side several times. Then turn your spine to the right and then to the left.



Fig. 12 Upper Stretching and Twisting to Four Sides

Windmill Exercise: Opening the Spinal Joints

Do each phase of this practice very slowly and mindfully.

A. Outer Front Extension

1-3. Begin in the same stance as for Waist Loosening. Bring both hands together and hook the two thumbs together. Keeping the hands close to the torso, inhale and raise the arms until they are extended straight above the head, with the fingers pointing upward. Gently stretch up in this position, extending the spine slightly backwards. You can even say “**Ahhhhhh**” as you would when you stretch first thing in the morning.

4-5. Begin to exhale slowly and bend forward, reaching as far out in front as you can, keeping the head between the arms. Try to feel each joint of the spine releasing one by one in a wavelike motion. Bend first from the lumbar vertebrae, then from the thoracic vertebrae, and finally from the cervical vertebrae. At this point you should be completely bent over.

6-9. Slowly straighten your back, once again feel each joint of the spine become open, from the sacrum, lumbar, thoracic and cervical vertebrae. Allow arms and head to hang heavily until you are back in the starting position. Repeat three to five times. Finish with the arms over the head as at the end of Step one.

B. Inner Front Extension

1-3. Now do the same movements, but in reverse. Point the fingertips downward and slowly lower the arms, keeping the hands close to the torso. When the arms are completely lowered, begin to bend forward. Release the head, cervical vertebrae, thoracic vertebrae, and lumbar vertebrae, until you are bent all the way forward as at the end of Step two of the Outer Front Extension. Feel each joint become open.

4-5. Keeping the head between the arms, start to straighten back up. The arms should extend in front as you slowly move back to an erect position. When you finish straightening up, the arms should be straight up above the head. Repeat three to five times.

C. Left Outer Extension (Left Side Bending)

1. Keep your head between your arms in the overhead position, and lean to the left. You should feel a gentle stretch on the left side of the waist. Continue stretching down and to the side until you are bend all the way down to the side.

2. Then circle back up on the right side until you are once again standing straight with the arms overhead. Repeat three to five times.

D. Right Outer Extension (Right Side Bending)

Repeat the side-bending movements as in the left Outer Extension, but to the right. Do three to five times.

E. Conclusion

To finish, unhook the thumbs and let the arms slowly float back down to the sides.



Fig. 13 Windmill Exercise



Fig. 14 *Windmill Exercise*

Look from Side to Side from the Neck

1. Neck tilt: Let the head drop gently on one side, then the other back and forth. Let gravity do the work. Try to feel how much it weighs. Keep both shoulders dropped, relaxed and motionless.

2. Side to side rotation: Look over the shoulders one after the other, looking further and further back as you warm up.

Let your eyes direct the movement and let your neck follow so it is always in extension, never in contraction.

3. Up and down: Look up right over the head, then down in between your feet alternately.

4. Rotations: Follow a circle around your face clockwise several time, then counterclockwise. Again keep your eyes open and directing the movement. The neck is only following.

For all the exercises make sure you keep the rest of the body joints loose and breathe calmly from your abdomen.



Fig. 15 Look from Side to Side from the Neck

Shoulder Rotation with Eyes

1. Lateral movement: Spot an object in each extreme angle of your peripheral vision and move from one to the other alternately without turning your neck.

2. Up and down: Spot an object over your head, another one by your feet and go from one to the other without tilting your head.

3. Upper right corner of the right eye to the left corner of the left eye.

4. Upper left corner of the left eye to the right corner of the right eye.

5. Rotations: Follow a circle around the eyes very slowly and catch yourself when your eye balls want to skip an angle and go back and forth there until you have a smooth movement.

N.B.: Make sure you are breathing steadily from your abdomen and your neck is unlocked.



Fig. 16 Shoulder Rotation with Eyes

Shoulders

1. Shoulder Rotations: Stand with feet a shoulder or hip width apart in a relaxed manner.
 - a. Bring the shoulders all the way up to the ears.
 - b. Then as far back as possible (Trying to touch the shoulder blades together).
 - c. Then let them drop.

Repeat several times.

2. Shoulder rotations + Front Arms Stretch
Stand with feet a shoulder or hip width apart in a relaxed manner, arms extended forward.
 - a. Bring the shoulders all the way up to the ears.
 - b. Then as far back as possible (Trying to touch the shoulder blades together).
 - c. Then let them drop.
 - d. Stretch all the way from the tip of the fingers to the spine as if you were pulled forward by the fingers.

Repeat several times.

3. Shoulder Rotations + Arms Stretch over the Head: Stand with feet a shoulder or hip width apart in a relaxed manner, arms extended over the head.
 - a. Bring the shoulders all the way up to the ears.
 - b. Then as far back as possible (Trying to touch the shoulder blades together).
 - c. Then let them drop.
 - d. Stretch all the way from the tip of the fingers to the spine as if you were pulled by the fingers from the ceiling.

Repeat several times.

4. Shoulder Rotations + Lateral Arms Stretch.

Stand with the feet a shoulder or hip width apart in a relaxed manner, arms stretched out laterally.

a. Bring the shoulders all the way up to the ears.

b. Then as far back as possible (Trying to touch the shoulder blades together).

c. Then let them drop.

d. Stretch all the way from the tip of the fingers to the spine as if you wanted to touch the walls in both directions at the same time.

Repeat several times.

The stretch happens from the tip of the fingers and involves all tendons, ligaments and faciae from the tip of the fingers to the spine. This is excellent for prevention and correction of carpal tunnel syndrome and tennis elbow.



Fig. 17 Shoulders

Forearm and Palms Slapping the Organs

Twist the spine left to right, letting go of the arms with palms slapping the organs (Lungs, Heart, Kidneys, Spleen, Pancreas, Lower Bladder) as you turn the spine several times.

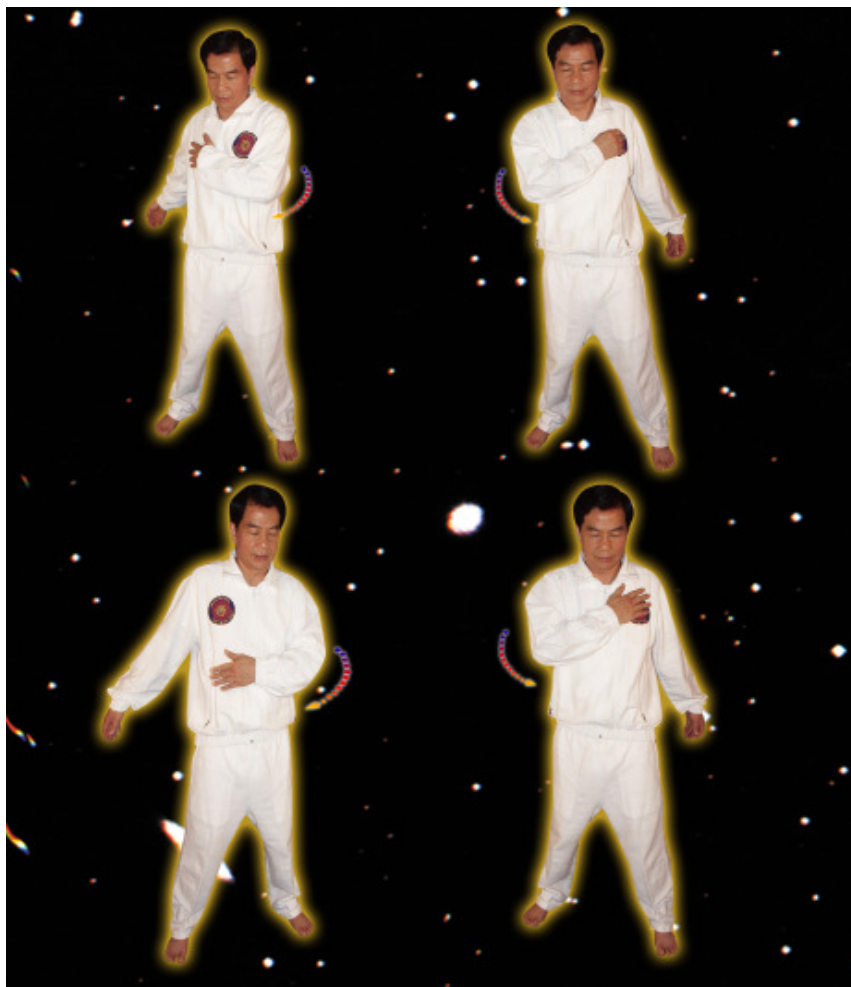


Fig. 18 Forearm and Palms Slapping the Organs

Hand and Wrist

Wrists:

One arm and hand active, the other arm and hand passive. The passive side receives the treatment/exercise, the other side (active side) gives the stretch. Stretch is given upon exhalation.

1. Simple flexion:
 - a. The active hand lifts up the passive wrist at sternum level and flexes the wrist by pushing the hand toward the inside of the arm.
 - b. Repeat several times.
 - c. Switch sides.
2. Internal rotation with flexion and abduction of the wrist:
 - a. Passive hand facing your face; the active hand wraps around the back of the passive hand, thumb between the little finger and the ring finger, with middle finger and ring finger wrapping around the wrist of the passive hand.
 - b. Rotation of the passive wrist is given by pushing the thumb of the active hand between the little finger and the ring finger of the passive hand while the middle and ring fingers of the active hand pull the passive wrist in the opposite direction.
 - c. Repeat several times.
 - d. Switch sides.
3. External rotation with flexion and adduction of the wrist:
 - a. Arms outstretched palms facing each other.
 - b. Passive hands turns outwardly, active hands spoons the passive hand, slightly clenches the fingers together holding the weight of the passive hand and arm.
 - c. Passive side decontracts and lets drop the whole weight of the elbow and shoulder.
 - d. Active hand flexes and stretches the passive wrist by bringing it closer to the sternum.
 - e. Repeat several times.
 - f. Switch sides.

4. External rotation with abduction and extension of the wrist:
 - a. Passive hand extended, with arm outstretched, palm facing forward, thumb down.
 - b. Active hand takes all the fingers of the passive hand in a palm to palm position giving an upward rotation, hyper extending the wrist while you let drop the whole weight of your arm and shoulder.
 - c. Then lift up all the weight of your wrist, elbow and shoulder in a stretching movement toward the ceiling. Stretch should be felt all the way from the fingers to the neck.
 - d. Repeat several times.
 - e. Switch sides.
5. Hyper extension of the wrist:
 - a. Passive hand palm up.
 - b. Active hand takes the fingers of the passive hand and hyper extends the fingers, hand, wrist and arm in one motion down toward the leg.
 - c. Repeat several times.
 - d. Switch sides.



Fig. 19 Hand and Wrist



Fig. 20 Elbow Twist

Opening the Door of Life

1. Begin in the same stance as the Waist Loosening. Twist to the left as in the Waist loosening exercise, initiating the movement from the hips. Let the right arm swing across the front of the torso, raising it up to head height with the palm facing away from you. At the same time, let the left arm swing around the back and place the back of the left hand over the Door of Life point (the point on the spine opposite the navel).

2. When you reach your full extension, relax, and then extend again by loosening the lower back. Feel the gentle stretch and increased extension coming all the way from the Door of Life area, not from the shoulders. Extend in this way two or three times.

3. Twist to the right and repeat the steps as above on the right side. Repeat nine times to each side.



Fig. 21 Door of Life



Fig. 22 Opening the Door of Life

Elephant Swings his Trunk

Let go of your arms and move your hips back and forth throwing your arms out and loosening your shoulders and neck.



Fig. 23 Elephant Swings his Trunk

Squatting to Open Sacrum

A good exercise for developing the squatting position is to stand with your feet shoulder width (when you improve your squatting ability, place both feet together) close to a wall, facing the wall and then to squat straight down from the kua (like you are sitting down, not bending the knees too much). The wall will prevent you from leaning forward when you squat. Some people tend to bend the head forward first, and also to bend the back and lean forward. Using a wall will make you see whether you are bending too much. Breathe in the Lower Tan Tien. Keep the chest relaxed and feel a force pulling you down and a force pulling you up, when you squat down to the Earth.

To squat down you can also use the help of a partner or the edge of a table. Be sure that you go straight down and bend from the kua. When you work with a partner, stand shoulder width facing each other, arms stretched, and firmly grasp each other's wrists. From this position, squat straight down together from the kua while supporting one another. Sink as deep as you both can without leaning forward.

Start by standing in front of the wall 18 cm or more away. Eventually you can move closer to the wall. Place both hands on the sides, the tips of the fingers touch the thigh bones.

Slowly drop down from the groin, like you are sitting down; drop till you can't go any further, and lightly bend the knees. If you bend too much your knees will hit the wall.



Fig. 24 Squatting to Open Sacrum

Clench and Tap Teeth

Clench and tap your teeth several times from the front, right and left sides.



Fig. 25 Clench and Tap Teeth

Bone Breathing

1. Bone Breathing Process

The Bone Breathing Process uses the mind and the eyes to absorb the Cosmic Force into the bones. The mind and the eyes are also used immediately after each exercise (in any posture) to bring the energy down to the navel.

Bone Breathing is the method of drawing external energy through the skin into the bones to clean out fat in the bone marrow("Cleansing the Marrow"). This process helps to regenerate the bone marrow, thereby rejuvenating the production of blood and Chi. It is vital to the practice of Iron Shirt Chi Kung III, but is also used in Iron Shirt I to increase blood and energy circulation. Chi can then flow freely into the bones and blood, carrying nutrients and oxygen to areas in need. Tension in the muscles surrounding the bones is lessened and the bones become strong.

Bone Breathing is a three-stage process of inhaling and exhaling as through the fingers and toes:

a. Use the powers of the mind and eyes to breathe in outside energy through the fingertips, gradually up to the hands and arms to the skull, and then down the spinal column. A sensation is felt as you breathe into each area.

b. Inhale and exhale the same way through the toes and then, by degrees, inhale up to and into the thigh bones, legs, and hips (also in a step-by-step progression). Then inhale up your legs to the sacrum where the energy will enter your spinal column, surging up throughout the nervous system.

c. Finally, breathe into both the arms and legs simultaneously, through C-7, and up into the head. Remember that you absorb and eject energy more effectively at specific points, many of which protrude from the body; toes, fingertips, elbows, knees, sacrum. Door of Life. C-7, shoulders, and nose.



Using the mind breathe in external energy through the fingertips and toes.

Fig. 25 Bone Breathing

2. Bone Compression

This exercise is another mean of increasing the flow of Chi to the muscles and the bones, squeezing out toxins, sediment, waste material, and negative emotions that have become stored in the muscles. Once these negative qualities are cleaned out, positive ones have room to grow. Positive emotions relax the muscles and the entire body.

We also know the Bone Compression as the “Power Exercise” or the “Dynamic Tension” which serves to greatly tone up the muscles and strengthening the bone and bone marrow. It is accomplished by tightening and squeezing the muscles to the bones as you inhale, then releasing and totally relaxing those muscles as you exhale strongly.

Practice in the following progression: (a) hands, forearms, upper arms; (b) legs, lower legs, thighs; (c) neck and head, (d) back (spinal cord) and chest (rib cage). Peel the muscles and bones separate from each other as you relax.

Complete the exercise by standing up straight with the palms on the navel. (Men, left palm over right; women, right palm over left). Stand for a while, and feel the Chi flow in your Microcosmic Orbit. Then concentrate on collecting the energy in the navel. Men should spiral the energy outwards in a clockwise direction 36 times, being careful not to go above the diaphragm or below the pubic bone, then inwards 24 times, and collect the energy at the navel. Women should spiral in a counterclockwise direction 36 times, reversing when spiraling inwards for 24 times. When you are finished, relax, and use the palms to gently brush any remaining energy down from the chest.

Tips of the fingers have a lot of Chi.

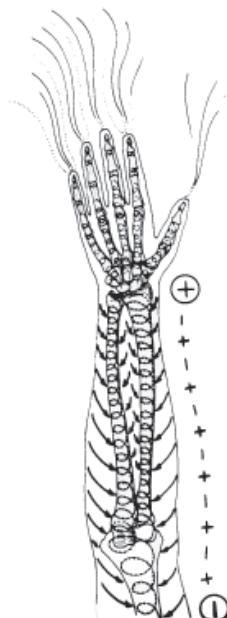


Fig. 26 *Touching Navel and Sexual Center*

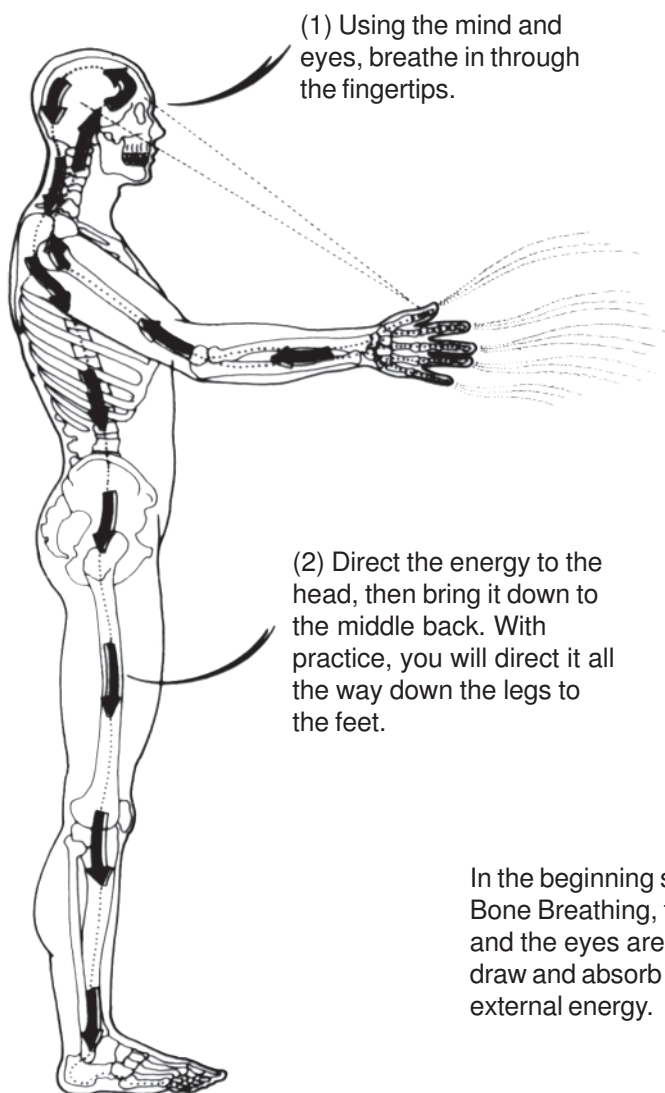


Fig. 27 *Stage One: Respiration through the Fingers*

Precautions

The following is a warning to all practitioners, especially those with high blood pressure, emotional instability, heart or chest pain, or any acute illness.

1. If you have high blood pressure, check with a doctor before attempting to practice Iron Shirt. Do not do the exercises and breathing techniques strenuously.

2. Women should not do Iron Shirt breathing during menstruation, but may practice the structure, standing meditations, and Bone Breathing. If pregnant, do not practice Iron Shirt Packing Breathing; use only Energizer Breathing and standing meditation.

3. Be sure that the diaphragm is lowered while practicing these exercises to avoid accumulating energy in the heart and to facilitate the flow of the Microcosmic Orbit. Do not pack the chest as this can cause energy to congest there, which can affect the heart. Again, you should always relax the chest.

4. Always breathe into the lower abdomen and perineum to avoid trapping negative energies in other parts of the body. especially in the brain, the heart, or the liver.

5. After practicing the postures, be sure to place the tongue on the roof of the mouth to connect the Microcosmic channels so that all energy from the head can be drawn down through the Functional Channel to the navel for storage. Do not leave energy in the head or upper body.



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Master Mantak Chia is the creator of Universal Tao System, Healing Tao, Tao Yoga and is the director of the Universal Tao Master School at Tao Garden Health Spa & Resort in the beautiful northern countryside of Chiangmai, Thailand. Since childhood he has been studying the Taoist approach to life. His mastery of this ancient knowledge, enhanced by his study of other disciplines, has resulted in the development of the Universal Tao System which is now being taught throughout the world.

Simple Chi Kung **Warm Up Exercises**

In this booklet you will learn a series of simple exercises which can be used as warm ups for higher Chi Kung practices. When the practitioner does these exercises, the body is prepared to handle the energy it is about to absorb and the circulation of Chi and blood throughout the body is facilitated.

The exercises are easy to perform and are designed to loosen the joints and relax the muscles to improve the flow of Chi and blood. Every part of the body is given attention, and the exercises start with generalized "bouncing" to shake the joints loose and open them.

The joints of the knees, hips and spine are worked, and these exercises are followed by breathing routines, then stretching, twisting and rotation exercises working on the tendons and ligaments in different parts of the body.

Specific techniques for opening the Door of Life point and the Sacrum are illustrated in a clear step-by-step manner, and the booklet ends with an explanation of Bone Breathing and Bone compression.

Practice of these warm up exercises will result in a deeper level of loosening in the body and an increased awareness of the body's structure. The practitioner can then progress to practice of Iron Shirt Chi Kung with confidence.

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