

YOUR HEALING KNEADS

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

What is Qi?

A fundamental concept of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) dating back over 3,000 years, qi (pronounced "chee") is the Chinese word for energy, which also carries with it connotations of "air," "breath," and "life force."

In TCM, it is understood that everything from humans and animals to rocks and trees is filled with qi. This energy facilitates function, communication, and connection and is the uniting force of the universe, as well as the animating life force in all objects.

Qi in the Body

Qi flows through the body via the 14 meridian channels, which run either up

the flow of qi and resulting in energy congestion. Several TCM techniques are designed to clear these blockages and restore balance and flow to the body's energy.

Working with Qi

Along each meridian are points, known as acupoints or pressure points, where these energy blockages are likely to occur. Significant acupoints are also known as trigger points, and these are often starting points for therapists working to clear congested qi.

An important principle of qi is that clearing blockages at certain trigger points will help restore flow and thus



Qi is a fundamental concept of traditional Chinese medicine.

or down throughout the body along specific pathways. These pathways deliver energy to organs, structures, and systems in a constant pattern, and when qi is flowing along these meridians a person is said to be in balance.

Illness, injury, stress, and other trauma can cause blockages along these meridians, thus impairing or stopping

impact parts of the body that are connected along the various meridians. For example, this could mean that working on someone's foot might benefit an internal organ like the liver. This concept further illustrates that qi in the body is one balanced system in which one imbalance can affect several

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Respect for ourselves guides our morals, respect for others guides our manners.

-Laurence Sterne

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body parts and even alter emotional states.

Cultivating Qi

Every person is born with a certain amount of qi, and through our lives we increase it and refill it through breathing, eating, and moving. One specific practice of movement to increase and balance qi is known as qigong, a system of hands-on and hands-off techniques that incorporate timed breathing, gentle movement, meditation, visualization, and more to build and balance qi. This practice can be undertaken with a qigong practitioner or on one's own once schooled in the movements and techniques.

Another movement practice intended to increase and balance the body's energy is t'ai chi, which uses relaxed breathing and rhythmic movements to relax the body and refresh the mind. T'ai chi is not strenuous and can be practiced by people of any age.

The Cycle of Qi

A TCM practitioner focusing on qi often asks more questions of a client during the intake process than a Western-styled massage therapist. One reason for this is that balancing qi is more than just correcting physical blockages; it is about understanding what may have caused those blockages in the first place and correcting that root cause.

Qi is also linked to elements and seasons in a cyclical way that can become disrupted.

Specific disharmonies or blockages can relate to specific phases, and knowing more about you can allow the practitioner to better assess and understand how best to help rebalance your qi.

Understanding Qi

For many people familiar with the Western medical tradition, qi is a difficult concept to grasp. Talking with a qigong practitioner or participating in a t'ai chi session are a few ways to gain exposure to the movements and the attitudes surrounding qi, but for some it may take experiencing energy work to

actually come to a better understanding. If nothing else, sitting quietly and focusing on your body can help you appreciate the ancient idea that we are filled with qi running throughout our bodies.

Randy Burgess, a practitioner trained in acupuncture and tui na, uses the following analogy of a boat in the water: "The wind reaches the sail, the sail expands and applies pressure to the mast, and the pressure to the mast moves the boat through the water. The wind isn't qi, the sail isn't qi, the mast isn't, the boat isn't, the water isn't. The qi is where the wind meets the sail, where the sail applies pressure to the mast, where the mast applies pressure to the boat, where the boat slips through the water. If there are holes in the sail, you're going to have qi deficiency; if the mast is weak and moves, it will move the boat forward, but there is deficiency; if there

are barnacles on the hull of the boat, it's not going to slip through the water efficiently, and there is deficiency."



Some ingredients used in traditional Chinese medicine.

Skin Care Through Changing Seasons

Keep your skin looking and feeling great

With the change in season, many people will begin to notice a difference in the way their skin looks and feels. Many people find that as we move closer to winter, their skin becomes more dried out and flaky. The good news is there are things you can do to keep your skin looking good as the seasons change.

"Winter approaching doesn't mean your skin has to look dull and dry," says Katherine Goldman, celebrity esthetician/waxologist and owner of the Stript Wax Bar. "It also doesn't mean you have to turn to chemicals in an effort to maintain some of your tan throughout the fall and winter. There are much better options available to everyone who wants to take advantage of them."

Here are some tips that can help keep skin looking and feeling great as the seasons change:

- Dull skin can be countered by having regular facials. Facials remove dead and flaky skin and help restore a natural glow. They give skin an overall healthier appearance.

- When winter approaches, it is important to moisturize the skin so it doesn't become dried out. After cleansing, follow with an anti-aging serum and apply a good quality moisturizer.

- Bypass the chemical tans that come in take-home spray bottles and lotions. They usually contain chemicals you should avoid putting on the skin and will most likely not provide the natural tan look most people seek. Tanning booths also have risks, so opt for an organic spray tan instead

- Go to a waxologist for hair removal, so skin irritation and problems can be avoided. Having hair professionally waxed will keep the skin smooth and unblemished.

- Drink plenty of water to maintain youthful cells. If the skin doesn't get enough water, it will look aged and dehydrated.

- Eat foods like strawberries, tomatoes, salmon, edamame, tea, carrots, broccoli, and avocado, which have nutrients that help protect the skin and

keep it looking great.



Keep your skin looking great all winter long.

Be Immune to Inactivity

The World Health Organization has called inactivity the second-leading risk factor for non-communicable diseases and the fourth-leading risk factor for global mortality.

In the United States, inactivity has helped contribute to the fact that 35.9 percent of adults age 20 years and over are obese, as well as 18 percent of adolescents and children ages 6-19.

With risk factors like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, coronary artery disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and more, it's important to make sure you get enough exercise and activity to stay healthy.

Here are some tips to help you keep moving.

Be Aerobic Every Day

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends getting 2.5 hours of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise each week. If you break it down, that's just over 20 minutes a day of activities like walking, water aerobics, riding a bike, or pushing a lawnmower.

Want to cut that down even further? If you bump the exercise up to vigorous intensity, you can cut the time in half. Vigorous-intensity activities include jogging or running, swimming laps, and playing basketball or tennis.

Add Muscle-Strengthening

Lifting weights, working with resistance bands, and doing body-weight resistance exercises, heavy yard work, or yoga are all considered by the CDC to be important muscle-strengthening

activities. The recommendation is to get this type of exercise at least twice a week to the point where your muscles are tired.

If you focus on setting realistic goals and getting just a bit of exercise each day, you'll be on your way to meeting the requirements in no time. Find exercises and activities that you enjoy doing, and it won't seem like such a burden. Plus, you'll feel great about reducing the risk factors associated with a sedentary lifestyle. So get a plan, get out there, and get moving!

*You don't learn
to walk by
following rules.
You learn by
doing, and by
falling over.*

-Richard Branson

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