



BODYWORK

# Integrating *Qigong* into Your Treatment Plan

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Gentle, health-enhancing *qigong* exercises can easily become an integral aspect of an acupuncturist's treatment strategy. The detoxification, *qi* cultivation, storage and refinement that result from *qigong* practice helps patients take charge of their healing process and increases the effectiveness of acupuncture treatments. It is a powerful self-healing tool that can be utilized between visits, and has even been likened to "giving oneself acupuncture."

A typical *qigong* workout includes stretching and strengthening exercises, breathwork, creative visualization, self-massage, vocalization of sounds, and meditation through movement and stillness. *Qigong* is suitable for all ages and abilities, and can be performed standing, sitting or lying down.

Twenty minutes of *qigong* practice on a regular basis tones not only the body, but also the mind and spirit. It opens and strengthens *qi* and blood flow, removes *qi* blockages, opens the eight extra meridians, nourishes *shen*, strengthens organ function, balances hormones, enhances sexual vitality, and fortifies the bones. *Qigong* is touted to "retard the aging process" and can create youthful skin, eyes and hair, and strong yet flexible muscles and tendons, in addition to a clear mind and peaceful spirit.

The following three options are ways to integrate *qigong* into your work as a Chinese medical provider.

## Option #1

Providing private lessons in your office gives patients a sense of participation in their own healing process and draws new patients to your practice. Lessons can be taught in a hallway or treatment room. Natural lighting, views of nature, and clean air without draft or odors is preferable. Practicing within a small space reinforces that *qigong* can be done anywhere.[PB]

A recommended initial fee of \$40 covers a review of the intake form that includes a health history and explanation of available *qigong* sets and their benefits, necessary home practice commitment, plus the lesson itself. A typical lesson can include teaching the movements, making sure the student can do them without you, then leaving the room while they practice until you return to check progress and make corrections. While out of the room, you can provide treatments to other patients. Repeat this routine for 30 minutes to one hour, depending on the student's ability and needs.

The suggested fee for follow-up lessons is \$20, with a recommended frequency of no more than one lesson per week. Private lessons foster independent practice habits, but lack the *qi* experience of group practice. This can be remedied through occasional group classes of private students.

## Option #2

Teaching *qigong* at a college or high school adult education program is a way to offer group lessons to your patients. A class could last 1-1/2 hours and include 20 minutes of lecture on various aspects of Chinese medicine, with the remaining time for exercise. A research paper can be a course requirement to deepen *qigong* knowledge.

The class setting should be in a peaceful and serene practice area, and outdoors whenever possible. This allows students to receive *qi* from nature and benefit from breathing fresh air. Practice along with students so they can witness *qi* flow, but also sit and watch them practice in order to offer corrections. Find a teaching pace that everyone can follow, which allows for group corrections as well as individual instruction.[PB]

### Option #3

Recommending videos to self-motivated patients peaks interest for participating in their own recovery. Many videos are easy to follow and great for beginners. Video instruction combined with private lessons can occur in the following ways:

1. A patient who learns *qigong* from a video needs feedback, so provide a few private sessions in your office and give them corrections.
2. A patient's interest gets peaked from video instruction and wants to learn more *qigong*, so teach them yourself or refer them to another video or practitioner in your area. You can find a list of teachers on the National Qigong Association Web site ([www.nqa.org](http://www.nqa.org)).
3. A patient takes a video home but doesn't watch it, so you teach them the movements first and have them use the video thereafter.
4. A patient is concerned that they will never be able to do the movements on their own if they learn from a video, so you teach them the movements first, which ensures they have memorized the movements. They can always refer to the video later.

No matter which method is chosen, a teacher must instill the importance of regular and consistent practice. The student needs to figure out the best time to practice and how to bring *qigong* into the routine of their day. This needs to be accompanied by a dedication to practice, no matter how busy the student is.

It's not unusual for a *qigong* student to be found practicing at the airport while waiting to board a plane, standing in a line, or on a lunch break in front of fellow workers. Who knows? With the Jet Blue airline setting the trend with yoga practice cards in the seat pocket for passengers, maybe it's not so far-fetched to imagine a sitting *qigong* video being played on the passenger's monitor in the future. In the meantime, good luck in your quest to help yourself and others through the amazing healing power of Chinese medicine.

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