

# The Modern Health Benefits of Chinese Qigong

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## Abstract

Chinese Qigong is a traditional practice that combines physical exercise, breathing regulation, and psychological meditation, aimed at enhancing individual physical health and psychological balance. Its theoretical foundation is rooted in Daoism and Traditional Chinese Medicine, emphasizing the importance of the flow of qi for health. In recent years, Qigong has gained increasing attention worldwide, particularly in health management and rehabilitation. In modern society, individuals face serious threats to their physical and mental health due to prolonged high-stress conditions, and Qigong is expected to contribute to improving the well-being of contemporary people.

**Keywords:** Qigong; Acupuncture; Tuina; Mind-Body Unity

## Introduction

In the 1980s, with the implementation of China's reform and opening-up policy, the international dissemination of Qigong gradually accelerated. Qigong has not only gained attention as a traditional health-preserving method but has also received widespread recognition globally for its potential health benefits. In the United States, Qigong practice provides opportunities for physical exercise while emphasizing inner peace and harmony, making it popular among many Western populations [1]. Furthermore, the learning and practice of Qigong have led to the establishment of various workshops, courses, and training programs, allowing more people to systematically learn Qigong under the guidance of professional instructors and experience its effects on physical and mental well-being [2]. Health institutions and universities in several countries have begun to incorporate Qigong into health promotion and rehabilitation programs, establishing it as a scientific and effective self-regulation method. Numerous studies have started to explore the positive impacts of Qigong on stress management, mental health, and physical rehabilitation, promoting its application in modern medicine.

## Origins and Development of Qigong

Qigong first appeared in China during the pre-Qin period, where philosophical thoughts emphasized the existence of qi and harmony with nature. Daoist cultivation methods and concepts profoundly influenced the development of Qigong, stressing the harmonization of internal qi to achieve physical health and spiritual elevation [3]. Over the course of more than 5,000 years of Chinese history, Qigong gradually formed multiple schools, such as Daoist Qigong, Buddhist Qigong, and Martial Qigong. Daoist Qigong emphasizes the integration of natural laws and the body, focusing on the balance between static and dynamic states to achieve harmony of body and mind, as seen in practices like Tai Chi and Eight Pieces of Brocade [4]. Buddhist Qigong, on the other hand, places greater emphasis on psychological cultivation, focusing on spiritual awakening and inner tranquility, with practices such as sitting meditation and mindfulness [5]. Compared to the previous two types, Martial Qigong places more emphasis on strength and agility, often combining with various forms of Chinese martial arts to pursue the goal of defeating opponents in combat.

## The Theoretical Foundation of Qigong and Traditional Chinese Medicine

The theoretical foundation of Qigong is deeply rooted in the traditional Chinese philosophical and medical systems, particularly in the theories of yin-yang and the five elements, as well as meridian theory. Qigong views “qi” as the fundamental energy that constitutes life, flowing through the body’s meridian system to maintain health and balance [6]. Within this framework, the smooth flow of qi directly affects the functions of various organs and overall health. Therefore, the practice of Qigong aims to regulate the flow of qi to achieve health preservation and disease treatment. Qigong emphasizes the balance of yin and yang, positing that a healthy state results from the harmony of yin and yang and the smooth circulation of qi and blood. By practicing Qigong, individuals can achieve emotional and physical balance in their lives, thereby avoiding health issues caused by external stress and internal disharmony [7].

Qigong has a profound connection with Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), and together they form a core component of traditional Chinese medicine. Qigong is a form of exercise that emphasizes the regulation of internal qi to improve health, while TCM focuses on achieving balance and harmony in the body through holistic adjustment. In Qigong practice, the concept of “qi” is central, viewed as the basic energy of life. Through techniques such as breath regulation, guiding movements, and intention, practitioners can enhance the flow of qi within the body, thereby improving physical health and mental well-being [8]. In TCM theory, the smooth flow of qi directly impacts the circulation of qi and blood, the function of organs, and overall health. This requires Qigong practitioners to achieve a state of “unity of intention and mind,” emphasizing the guidance of intention to influence the flow of qi [9]. In TCM treatment, patients can use Qigong’s breath regulation techniques as a tool for self-regulation, helping to alleviate anxiety, enhance mood, and increase psychological resilience. Physicians may also employ acupuncture, tuina, and other therapies as complementary treatments to enhance efficacy [10].

## Methods of Practicing Qigong

The methods of practicing Qigong are diverse, primarily including core elements such as breath regulation, guiding movements, and intention. Breath regulation is the foundation of Qigong practice, emphasizing the adjustment of internal breath through deep and even breathing. Practitioners typically use abdominal breathing, which involves expanding the abdomen during inhalation and contracting it during exhalation. This method can effectively increase lung capacity, promote the full absorption of oxygen, and enhance the body’s energy [11]. Guiding movements refer to specific actions and postures that assist in the flow of qi within the body. These movements are usually gentle and slow, aimed at relaxing the muscles, clearing meridians, and enhancing the circulation of qi and blood. Practitioners often

accompany these movements with guided intention, focusing their attention on specific areas of the body to enhance the perception and direction of qi [12].

Intention also plays an important role in Qigong. The principle of “intention guiding qi” emphasizes that practitioners can effectively mobilize and direct the internal qi through focused attention and imagination. For example, during practice, practitioners can visualize the flow of qi within their bodies and guide their intention according to different health goals, such as boosting immunity or alleviating pain [13]. In practical applications, Qigong can also be combined with meditation, helping practitioners achieve a state of unity between body and mind, enhancing focus and inner tranquility while promoting relaxation.

## Effects of Practicing Qigong

Practicing Qigong is regarded as an effective method for physical and mental cultivation. Firstly, Qigong practice can promote blood circulation and enhance cardiopulmonary function, thereby reducing the risk of illness and helping to boost immunity and improve overall health [14]. Additionally, Qigong can increase the body’s flexibility and endurance, improving overall fitness levels and enabling practitioners to perform daily activities with greater ease and agility. Secondly, breath regulation and meditation techniques in Qigong can effectively alleviate stress and anxiety, enhancing mental health [15]. Furthermore, Qigong has a significant impact on improving concentration and cognitive abilities. By focusing on breathing and movements, practitioners can better cope with various challenges in daily life, enhance their efficiency in learning and work, and alleviate insomnia and sleep disorders [16].

## Conclusion

As an ancient method of physical and mental cultivation, Qigong has gained wide recognition and application in modern society. Through breath regulation, guiding movements, and intention practice, Qigong can effectively promote physical health, relieve stress, and improve mental states, thereby enhancing the quality of life for individuals. Research indicates that Qigong has significant effects on boosting immunity, improving sleep quality, and alleviating chronic diseases, making it suitable for people of various ages and health conditions. Future studies should further explore the integration of Qigong with modern medicine, uncovering its potential in psychological therapy and rehabilitation, and promoting the internationalization and scientific development of Qigong to benefit more individuals in achieving physical and mental well-being.

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