

Tai Chi Stretching Exercises

Breathing position – tongue on roof of mouth, just behind gum ridge

Stance — feet shoulder width apart, pelvis tipped under, weight on the balls of feet

Open with the QiGong breathing exercise:

- Hands in front of chest, head width apart
- On inhale "push" hands shoulder width apart
- On exhale "push" hands together head width apart
- Do exercise at a comfortable breathing rate
- Repeat 3 X

Repeats: Each stretch may be repeated 3 – 5 times

1. **Neck**
 - Feet shoulder width apart, knees relaxed, hands in squeeze ball position
 - a. **flexion** – head down, hands in front of body, palms down, raise to shoulder level (head follow hands) turn hands, push in to chin (chin toward back gently), push out and down (head follow hands)
 - b. **rotation** — slowly bring right palm up to eye level, move the palm to the right side turning head gently while looking at the palm. Repeat on the left
2. **Shoulders**
 - a. **forward circles of shoulders** — raise shoulders, roll shoulders gently forward 3 times
 - b. **backward circles of shoulders** — raise shoulders, roll shoulders gently backward 3 times
 - c. **large circles** – widen stance slightly, hands palms out and up, bring together at shoulder level, lower hands, palms down to waist level (breathe in on up, and out on down); breathe when raising hands, exhale when pushing down
3. **Spine**
 - a. **stretch** – hold ball, push top hand down, lower hand up as far as is comfortable, rotate upper hand so that palm is facing down, squeeze ball, pushing hands past one another, rotate upper hand, back to central position
 - b. **rotation** – hands in front as though you are carrying a large beach ball, knees slightly bent, turn waist gently to one side (following the elbow on top) then rotate hands and turn to other side, then back to front
4. **Hip**
 - a. **forward/backward** — push hands back, bring leg to front, resting on heel, bring hands to front, leg to back resting on toe; do three then switch to other leg
 - b. **side stretch** — push hands to the side as though you are pushing a wall and stretch the opposite foot to the side, then do other side
5. **Knee**
 - a. **knee lift** — hands in fists at waist palms up, bend one knee and kick out gently, at the same time let the opposite hand punch forward (palm down). Step down and do the other side
 - b. **step forward** — hands in fists at waist, palms up, bend knees, step forward with one foot, move forward and punch out with opposite fist, palm down. Step back and do the other side
6. **Ankle**
 - a. **toe/heel stretch** — hands on waist, bring heel on ground in front, then toe on the ground in front
 - b. **rotation** — rotate the ball of the foot on the ground with heel slightly raised touching first outside of the foot (little toe) then the inside of the of the foot (big toe)
7. **Close** with QiGong breathing exercise; repeat 3 X
8. **Ending**
 - Hands to side, clenching and unclenching fists, raising knees one after the other, greeting others