

Five Element Qi Stimulating Stretches

This short, invigorating series of meridian stretches is great for everyday toning, and it's a wonderful practice to bring about balance and a sense of overall well-being.

The entire routine can be done in a quick 10-15 minutes a day.

METAL: Lungs and large intestine

"The forces of autumn create dryness in Heaven and metal on Earth; they create the lung organ and the skin upon the body . . . and the nose, and the white color and the pungent flavor . . . the emotion grief, and the ability to make a weeping sound." ~ The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine



Figure 1



Figure 2

Stand with your feet shoulders' width apart, knees soft and link your thumbs behind your back. Inhale deeply, arch your back (Figure 1). As you breathe out bend forward (Figure 2). Keeping your fingers stretched out, relax the rest of your body as much as you can. Breathe deeply in and out, letting go of tension and thought. After a few deep breaths, slowly rise.

Repeat the exercise linking thumbs the other way around.

EARTH: Stomach and spleen

"The mysterious forces of the Earth create moisture in the Heaven and fertile soil upon the Earth; they create the flesh within the body and the stomach [and spleen]. They create the yellow color . . . and give the voice the ability to sing . . . they create the mouth, the sweet flavor, and the emotions of anxiety and worry." ~ The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine



Figure 3



Figure 4

Kneel on a padded surface. Sit on (or between) your heels, if possible. Sit on a cushion if neither are possible. Inhale deeply. On the exhale, place your hands behind you on the floor and lean your torso backwards. Relax your neck and let your head fall back (Figure 3). Look behind you, rolling your eyes upward. Take 3 deep, slow breaths. Gently return to starting position. Repeat and go deeper if possible (Figure 4). Please note: Do not go beyond what is comfortable – only the most limber can accomplish Figure 4 or beyond. People who find the position in Figure 4 easy may lay back so their torso lies completely on the floor and stretch their arms out straight above their heads. Be aware of the strain on the knees (which should remain on the floor at all times).

FIRE: Heart and small intestine

"The supernatural forces of summer create heat in Heaven and fire upon the Earth; they create the heart and pulse within the body . . . the red color, the tongue, and the ability to express laughter . . . they create the bitter flavor, and the emotions of happiness and joy." ~ The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine



Figure 5

Sit on the floor, with the soles of your feet touching, your legs relaxed outwards and your back straight. Breathe in deeply and clasp the balls of your feet (Figure 5). As you exhale, relax your head, neck and torso forward rounding down, allowing your elbows to relax towards the floor. Inhale and exhale a few times allowing yourself to relax into the stretch more on each outbreath.

WATER: Bladder and kidneys

"The forces of winter create cold in Heaven and water on Earth. They create the kidney organ and the bones within the body . . . the emotion fear, and the ability to make a groaning sound." ~ The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine



Figure 6

Sit with your legs straight out in front of you. Inhale and stretch your arms above your head. Lean forward to grasp the soles of your feet as you exhale (Figure 6).

Inhale and bend your knees, then exhale as you straighten them. Repeat 2 or 3 times. Then hold for 2 deep breaths, relaxing even more into the stretch on the outbreath. Roll up slowly out of the forward fold. Repeat entire sequence 2-3 more times.

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRE: Heart constrictor and triple heater

Figure 7

Sit cross-legged, with your arms crossed and your palms resting up either on your thighs or on the floor in front of your feet. The legs and feet make an overlapping pattern (refer to Figure 7). Breathe in deeply and on the exhale relax and bend forward (Figure 7). Hold position for a few breaths, relaxing more on each outbreath. Slowly roll up, returning to the starting position. Repeat the sequence 3 times, alternating overlapping pattern from right to left (hand & foot placed further from the body).

WOOD: Gallbladder and liver

“The supernatural forces of spring create wind in Heaven and wood upon the Earth. Within the body they create the liver and the tendons; they create the color green . . . and give the voice the ability to make a shouting sound . . . they create the eyes, the sour flavor, and the emotion anger.” ~ The Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine



Figure 8

Sit in a straddle pose, with your legs spread, spine upright. Inhale and stretch your arms up toward the ceiling. Turn at the waist, to look at your **right** foot. Breathe out and lean your body sideways towards your **left**, stretching your arms out towards your left foot. Look upwards rather than down to stretch the sides of your torso and neck (Figure 8). Hold the position and relax into it for two cycles of breath. Return to starting position. Repeat the sequence on the opposite side.

Repeat the entire sequence one more time on each side. Now, grasp your hands, inhale, raise your hands above your head, and lean forward as far as possible as you exhale. Inhale, and while still leaning forward, place your palms on the floor and move them forward, alternating right and left arms as you exhale. Hold at end range zone for a few breaths and slowly roll up and out of pose back into starting position.

Excerpt from the Healing Path of Prayer by Ron Roth

*May the Being of the Universe breathe into you the light of blessing and ripeness, the fulfillment of health & balance;
 May it protect you from distractions brittle and bent with a sphere of lucid fire;
 May it enlighten the heart of your passion with the contemplation of living energy;
 May it uncover the hidden strength within you, insight gathered from the eternal now;
 And may it show you its face of secret grace and silent refuge in a communion of deep peace.*