
Eight Silken Movements (adapted for chair)

Qigong is an ancient form of energy healing with roots in Chinese, Japanese and Korean medical traditions. One of the main branches of Chinese Medicine, Qigong exercises are comprised of simple, graceful movements that promote a peaceful mind and a healthy body. The Eight Silken Movements are a foundational set of Qigong exercises that promote overall health and wellbeing in the mind and body. Only practice these exercises to your own ability. Qi Gong isn't a flexibility contest.

1. Upholding Heaven with Two Hands

Cross your hands in front of your chest with soft fists. Inhale while raising both arms above your head. Raise your arms by sweeping outward in a large circle. If you don't have room to sweep in a circle sweep arms in front of you and up. Visualize gathering energy while raising your hands. Interlock your fingers and then push upward with your palms toward the sky. At the same time raise your head toward the sky and rise your feet onto your toes. Hold for a count of three to five and then exhale while bringing your arms back down to their original position in front of your chest. Repeat sequence three times.

2. Opening the Bow

Cross your arms with soft fists in front of your chest. Starting on the right side extend that arm and hand straight out to the side from the shoulder in a long stretch. If there is not enough room to point sideways point forward. Point your index finger on the extended hand. Simultaneous with stretching your right arm to the side, bend your left arm and stretch it back like you are drawing a bow. Take the tips of your left fingers and apply pressure to Lung 1 (acupressure point) in the hollow below the shoulder. Look down your right arm toward your extended finger and then stretch in a bow pull to open your chest. Hold for a count of three to five. You inhale while opening the bow, hold it while in full stretch and then exhale while returning to your beginning, cross-arm position. Repeat the movement in the other direction by extending your left arm out. One full movement cycle includes both directions. Repeat the full movement cycle (both directions) at least three times.

3. Raising Hands Separately

Visualize a big ball of energy in front of your abdominal area. Place one hand on top of the energy ball and the other below as if carrying it. Focus your intention in the connection of your hands to that ball by feeling for a sense of energy running in a line between your palms. Then slowly, starting with your right arm, stretch your right arm toward the sky, bend your wrist backwards and point your fingers to the left. At the same time, stretch your left arm toward the ground, in front or in back of the chair, and bend this wrist backwards and point the fingers of your left hand to the right. Your right palm will be pointing skyward. Your left palm will be pointed to the earth. Turn your gaze toward the upward hand. You inhale while doing the stretch and exhale while returning to the starting position (hands on the energy ball). Switch positions of your hands on the energy ball and repeat with your left hand going skyward and your right going to the ground. Return hands to energy ball. This completes one cycle. Do at least three cycles.

4. Looking Backwards

Cross your hands in front of your chest, fists soft. Extend your arms out to both sides, front and back if in a crowded space, from the shoulders while rotating your head to one side and look over your shoulder. At the same time, arch your back and point your thumbs toward the ground to the extent comfortable to do so. You inhale while moving your arms out to the side and back. Exhale when returning your arms to the starting crossed position. Repeat in the other direction. This completes one full cycle. Do at least three cycles.

5. Swinging Head and Trunk

Place your hands on your hips and slide up in your chair. Take a deep breath as you bend forward at the waist, lean backwards at the waist. With right hand on hip, raise your left arm over your head and bend to the right at the waist. Return left hand to hip and raise right hand overhead and bend to the left. Return to standing position hands on hips. One full cycle consists of all these movements done in the space of one exhalation. Do at least three cycles of the full sequence.

6. Standing on Toes

Let your arms hang loosely at your sides. If not enough room let your hands lay face down on your legs. In a seated position gently rock forward onto your toes. At the same time turn your palms to face forward (or up). Next, rock your feet backward onto your heels. When rocking your feet back turn your palms to face posterior. Inhale while rising your feet onto your toes. Exhale while lowering your feet back to heel position. Start your next inhale as you start moving forward again. Do at least three times, forward and back.

7. Punching with Angry Eyes

Bend forward slightly at the waist. Bend your arms in front of your chest and make fists in a boxing posture. Make your facial expression angry. While looking straight ahead, take a deep breath. Then make two quick, forward punches with sharp “hah” exhalations with each punch. Take a quick inhale, turn to the right and make two more punches to right with “hah” exhalations (stay within your body so as not to actually punch anyone next to you!). Repeat to the left. Do three cycles of front, right, and left. Finish by arching your back and punching toward the sky and then forward and punching toward the ground (two punches each). Only punch as much for as much you have room.

8. Holding the Toes and Stretching Back.

Stretch your arms over your head, palms facing in toward the mid-line of your body. Visualize grabbing energy. Bend forward at the waist, bringing that energy down with you. Go into a touching of the toes position or simply bend at the waist to where it is still comfortable. Hold that position. Only bend to your own limits, making sure the bend is at the waist. Then, slowly uncurl, bringing the energy back up with your hands and end by putting your fists into the small of your back and massaging that energy into your kidneys with your knuckles. You start your inhale when you stretch to the sky. You hold your breath while going into your toe touch, exhale when straightening back up.