

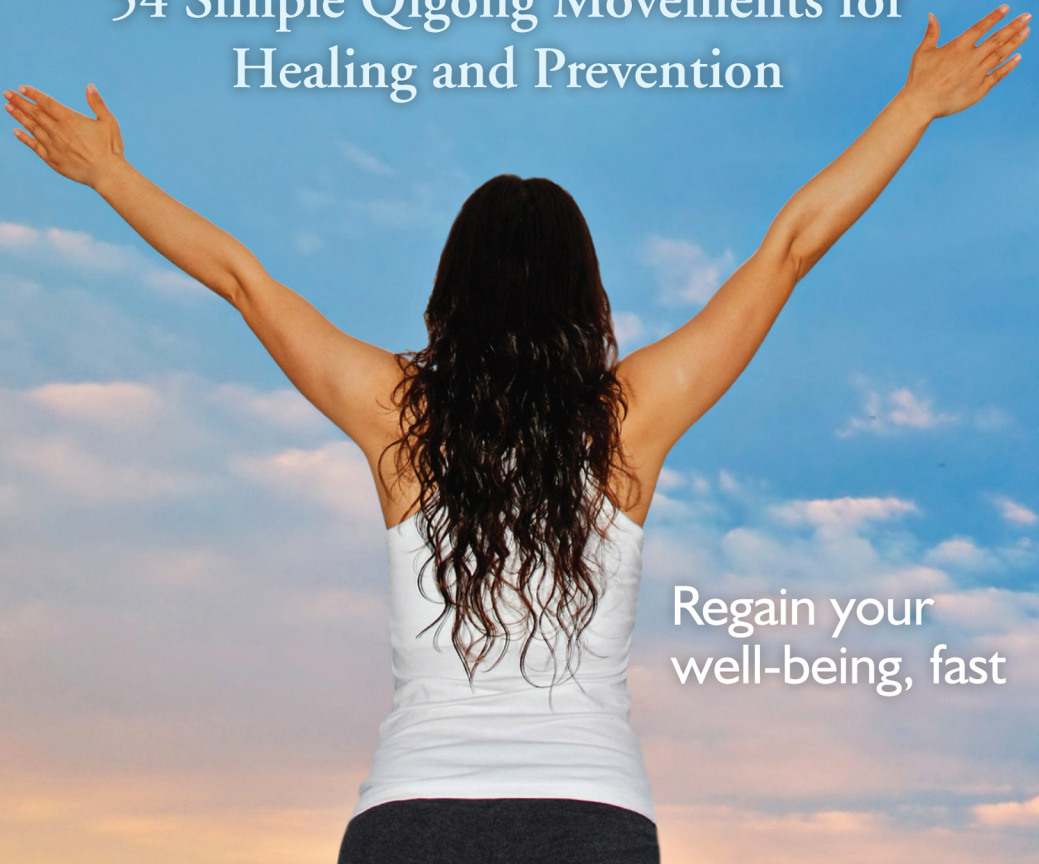
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF BOOKS AND VIDEOS ON QIGONG AND HEALTH

DR. YANG, JWING-MING

THE
**PAIN-FREE
BACK**

54 Simple Qigong Movements for
Healing and Prevention

Regain your
well-being, fast



Pain-free motion is the goal, and qigong movements will help you accomplish that goal.

“If you want to resolve chronic back pain, you need to heal the spine and rebuild its strength. In this masterful volume of qigong exercises, Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming shows you how and to get positive results within just three months.”

—Dr. Mark Wiley, MS, OMD, PhD, author

“Dr. Yang offers timely and respectful alternatives to the conventional Western medical approach using qigong as a way to resolve or avoid back pain outright.”

—John Loupos, MS, HSE, author, owner of the Pain and Mobility Clinic

“An informative and helpful approach to the management of back pain in an easy-to-understand format.”

—Sally Whitaker, Peak Pilates comprehensive instructor

“Offers hope for relief to anyone who has ever suffered from back pain.”

—Foreword Reviews

According to the National Institutes of Health, nearly 80 percent of adults experience low back pain at some point in their lives. For many, the condition progresses to the point where they will have to manage pain for years to come. Some will have little choice but to rely on prescription medication.

But for the millions of others with back pain, there is hope. By committing to a series of simple exercises, we can remain loose and flexible. We can prevent and heal injuries to maintain a strong, healthy back with less reliance on others.

Motion is the key, and in this book Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming will get you moving. You will regain natural, pain-free motion and balance with qigong, a timeless Chinese art that promotes healing, flexibility, and balance. The gentle, meditative movements emphasize proper motion in coordination with breath, making qigong the right choice for preventing, treating, and healing back pain.

This book presents 54 movements to help you loosen, stretch, strengthen, heal, and maintain a strong back for a lifetime.

You will learn

- What qigong is and why it is a good choice for healing and maintaining a healthy back
- 3 back-loosening movements
- 12 back-stretching movements
- 30 back-healing movements
- 7 movements for immediate relief
- 2 back-strengthening movements



Yang, Jwing-Ming, PhD, is a world-renowned author, scholar, and teacher and a leading authority on qigong. He has been involved in Chinese martial arts since 1961 and maintains more than 55 schools in 18 countries. Dr. Yang’s writing and teaching include the subjects of qigong, kung fu, tai chi chuan, massage, and meditation. Dr. Yang is the author of more than 35 books and 80 videos.

Cover design by Axie Breen
Author photo by Vadim Goretsky
Cover photos by © Xidong Luo | Dreamstime.com



YMAA Publication Center
1-800-669-8892
info@ymaa.com / www.ymaa.com

DR. YANG, JWING-MING

THE
PAIN-FREE
BACK

54 Simple Qigong Movements for
Healing and Prevention

YMAA Publication Center
Wolfeboro, NH USA

YMAA Publication Center, Inc.

PO Box 480

Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, 03894

1-800-669-8892 • info@ymaa.com • www.ymaa.com

ISBN: 9781594395376 (print) • ISBN: 9781594395383 (ebook)

Copyright ©2017 by Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming

All rights reserved including the right of reproduction in whole or in part in any form.

Edited by Leslie Takao and Doran Hunter

Cover design by Axie Breen

Photos by the author unless noted otherwise

This book typeset in 11.5 pt Minion Pro Regular

Typesetting by Westchester Publishing Services

Illustrations provided by the author unless otherwise noted.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Publisher's Cataloging in Publication

Names: Yang, Jwing-Ming, 1946– author.

Title: The pain-free back : 54 easy qigong movements for healing / Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming. —
Other titles: Back pain relief.

Description: Wolfeboro NH USA : YMAA Publication Center, Inc., [2017] | “This book . . . is an abridgement of the larger book by Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming titled ‘Back pain relief: qigong exercises for healing and prevention’. This version highlights the exercises you need to treat your back pain, leaving the richness of qigong healing history to the preceding fuller edition.”—Note from the Publisher.

Identifiers: ISBN: 9781594395376 (print) | 9781594395383 (ebook) | LCCN: 2017949055

Subjects: LCSH: Backache—Exercise therapy. | Qi gong. | Backache—Alternative treatment. | Backache—Prevention. | BISAC: HEALTH & FITNESS / Pain Management. | BODY, MIND & SPIRIT / Healing / Energy (Qigong, Reiki, Polarity) | HEALTH & FITNESS / Diseases / Musculoskeletal. | HEALTH & FITNESS / Exercise. | SPORTS & RECREATION / Health & Safety.

Classification: LCC: RD771.B217 Y213 2017 | DDC: 617.5/64062—dc23

Disclaimer:

The practice, treatments, and methods described in this book should not be used as an alternative to professional medical diagnosis or treatment. The author and publisher of this book are NOT RESPONSIBLE in any manner whatsoever for any injury or negative effects that may occur through following the instructions and advice contained herein.

It is recommended that before beginning any treatment or exercise program, you consult your medical professional to determine whether you should undertake this course of practice.

Note from the Publisher

This book, *The Pain-Free Back*, is an abridgement of the larger book by Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming titled *Back Pain Relief: Qigong Exercises for Healing and Prevention*. This version highlights the exercises you need to treat your back pain, the richness of qigong's healing history is available in the preceding fuller edition.

Table of Contents

Foreword xix

Preface xxi

How to Use This Book xxv

Introduction xxvii

CHAPTER 1: How Do the Chinese Treat Back Pain? 1

1-1. Introduction 1

1-2. Chinese Diagnosis and Treatment 1

1-3. How Can Qigong Cure Back Pain? 16

References 24

CHAPTER 2: Understanding Our Back 25

2-1. Introduction 25

2-2. The Qi Network in Our Back 25

2-3. Anatomical Structure of Our Back 43

CHAPTER 3: What Are the Possible Causes of Back Pain? 63

3-1. Introduction 63

3-2. The Possible Causes of Back Pain 63

CHAPTER 4: How Does Western Medicine Treat Back Pain? 83

- 4-1. Introduction 83
- 4-2. Western Medical Treatments 85
- 4-3. Suggestions from Western Doctors 91
- References 98

CHAPTER 5: Qigong for Back Pain 99

- 5-1. Introduction 99
- 5-2. Important Training Keys 101
- 5-3. Qigong Exercises for Back Pain 112

CHAPTER 6: Qigong Exercises 115

- 6-1. Loosening Up the Lower Back 116
- 6-2. Stretching 118
- 6-3. Spine Qigong 126

Conclusion 153

Acknowledgments 155

Translation and Glossary of Chinese Terms 157

About the Author 167

Index 175

Foreword

Ever since primitive man and woman reared up from their knuckles into the upright posture, the groan of “My aching back!” has echoed down the corridors of history in workplaces, homes, and hospitals. There are many reasons for this historical fact, a number of which have to do with lifestyle changes, fitness, and the modern environment, all of which were spelled out by Dr. Yang in the preface to his first edition and again in the preface to this revised edition. Not only does the back “carry” the body, but it also “carries” many of the psychological tensions stemming from our modern life.

In my psychiatric training, I learned this: to look at posture and body position for clues to a person’s mental state—the stooped back whose owner seemed bowed by the weight of depression, the shoulders drawn in and tight and the head retracted like a turtle’s in anticipation of the blow that comes only in the patient’s imagination, and similar signs.

In my medical training, I learned this: back pain is one of the hardest conditions to treat effectively. The most common approaches—protracted bed rest, lying on a firm surface, time off from work—are extremely difficult for the average person to follow. Noncompliance with the regimen is extremely common. Pain medications work somewhat but risk addiction. Muscle relaxants work somewhat but have troubling side effects. Surgery works as a last resort but can make some cases worse. As a young doctor, my heart would sink whenever a case of lower back pain came into the clinical emergency room, because each one carried with it the specter of the failure of Western medicine.

In my gongfu training with Dr. Yang, I learned this: he is a dedicated scholar and a gifted teacher. He merits the highest praise, however, for his efforts to meld Eastern and Western medical understanding in hopes of achieving greater synergy between the two—in hopes that the two worldviews, combined, will be greater than the sum of their parts.

To this end, he has thoroughly revised the first edition of this book, which featured his comprehensive and wide-ranging exploration of qi theory from its historical to its present context; of the structure and function of the back; and of the Western and Eastern approaches to healing it. In addition, he has added some new concepts for explaining qi and qigong from the Western point of view. These changes further express Dr. Yang's lifelong aim of connecting Chinese and Western medical science. Finally, Dr. Yang has discovered that some of the strenuous exercises described in the first edition—which might tax persons with serious back pain—can be done from the floor instead of from a vertical stance; additional approaches for this posture have been supplied in the current revised edition.

This edition continues the approach of the previous version in that the first chapter alone serves as an excellent and clear introduction to the basic Eastern medical and martial arts idea of qi. So well-structured is this discussion that it requires no previous familiarity with this concept. The remainder of the book employs clear descriptions, relevant illustrations, and well-organized instructions to achieve the goal of providing protection and relief from back pain.

Finally, martial arts are inseparable from morality. In the present context, Dr. Yang compassionately but firmly, like a great sports coach, warns against the moral pitfalls of impatience, laziness, and fear. He encourages readers to strive to stretch their limits—carefully!—to master pain and weakness in the back. The book you hold in your hands is a noteworthy contribution to this goal.

**Thomas G. Gutheil, MD, professor of psychiatry,
Harvard Medical School**

Preface

Our lifestyle continues to change from the way it was for over a million years. Now we sleep late, have less labor-intensive work, walk very little, have fewer children in our families, spend more time watching television and computer screens, and receive more radiation. Our bodies cannot adjust in a short period of time; therefore, it is difficult for us to adapt to these new, fast-developing lifestyles. Consequently, many problems occur. We have started to experience more knee pain and weakness, back degeneration and disease, breast cancer, and many other illnesses.

Today, back pain is considered by many to be one of the most serious health problems affecting quality of life. In fact, lower back pain is the second most common cause of pain, surpassed only by headaches, and is second to the common cold as a reason for doctor's office visits in the United States. It is estimated that thirty-one million Americans experience back pain at an annual cost of \$16 billion to \$20 billion in medical treatments and disability payments. The reason there are more back pain cases today than years ago is simply because we now use more machinery to replace our daily muscular work. Our torsos have become significantly weakened.

Therefore, if we are not aware of the problems generated by our new lifestyle and we fail to keep our torsos healthy and fit, we will most likely experience back pain before our fortieth birthdays. The key to maintaining the health of your torso is very simple: exercise correctly and stick with it. Constant exercise will slow down the aging and degeneration of the spine and build up stronger torso muscles to support the body. This is the most basic and important key to preventing back problems.

I have been studying martial qigong since I was fifteen years old. Since then, from my experience with practice and teaching, I have discovered that, among all of the qigong I have learned, the spinal qigong exercises and meditation from White Crane and taijiquan styles can heal spine problems and rebuild the strength of the torso. White Crane is considered to be a soft-hard martial style, while taijiquan is considered a soft style. In these two styles, the spine and chest are seen as two major bows, which can generate great martial power. In order to have this power, the condition of the spine and chest is extremely important. You must learn how to move them softly, like a silken whip, while coordinating the movements with your concentrated mind and breath. You must also know how to tense the torso, so that when the power reaches the target, your spine is not injured.

In these martial arts, through hundreds of years of practice and development, spine injury sometimes occurred due to the heavy training. Therefore, self-healing and conditioning of the spine have always been essential practices in White Crane and taijiquan.

Since 1986 I have conducted seminars in many countries and have taught these spinal qigong techniques for health purposes. The original purpose was to help some karate practitioners in France regain their spinal health, which they had injured through karate practice. Later, I realized these lower back problems were very common among karate practitioners due to the strenuous training. Countless people have told me how they have benefited from these simple spinal qigong exercises. I now realize that this qigong can not only heal and rebuild the spine but can also heal asthma, stomach problems, kidney irregularities, and, most important of all, strengthen the body's immune system.

I paid no attention to these qigong exercises between 1974 and 1984. During these ten years, I was busy studying for my doctorate and working as an engineer. It was not until late 1983 when I developed a kidney stone that I realized I was out of shape. When the

doctor told me I would most likely experience a recurrence of the kidney stone every six months, I was very frightened because of the intense pain involved. On January 1, 1984, I quit my engineering job. I then resumed my White Crane spinal qigong practice and started to move the torso muscles above the kidneys. In Chinese qigong, to tense and relax these two muscles on the kidneys is known as a kidney massage, and through correct spinal movement, the qi and blood circulation in the kidneys can be made smooth. Amazingly, since then, I have not experienced another kidney stone.

Since the first edition of this book was published, I have received many thanks from readers and seminar participants around the world for the benefits they received from the practices introduced in it. In their conversations with me, all of these people have made the same observation: you cannot practice off and on or just for a short period of time. You must be consistent, patient, and perseverant. Usually, after three months of practice, you can feel some improvement, and after six months, you see significant improvement or complete correction of the problem.

From my additional years of teaching in seminars, I have discovered and developed a few new movements that are especially beneficial for those who already have serious back pain. I have come to realize that many people who suffer serious back pain find it difficult to do some moving exercises. Later, through pondering and teaching, I discovered that doing the same exercises while reclining on the floor can help to reestablish a healthy condition of the back. I am presenting these updated exercises and the new information I have gained.

I believe that if the Western medical community can put some effort into experimenting with ancient healing methods as a complementary medicine, conventional medical treatment will be more complete and effective. Traditional medicine originated and evolved its approach from repeated experiences over thousands of years,

while modern medicines were developed from systematic study, experimentation, and research. If both approaches are useful, they should be able to cooperate with each other and complement each other.

This book is written to share my experience with those who need to heal the spine and rebuild its strength. I deeply believe that anyone, as long as he or she is patient and consistent with qigong exercises, will see positive results *within three months*. Naturally, this is not an easy task. It is a challenge to your health, happiness, and joy in life.

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming

Introduction

I T IS BELIEVED THAT the majority of adults—80 percent or more—will experience at least one significant episode of lower back pain at some point in their lives. It affects men and women alike, usually occurring between the late twenties and fifties, the middle working years. As is now known, lower back pain is the second most common cause of pain next to headaches and is second only to the common cold as a reason for office visits to primary care physicians in the United States. Once your spine is injured, it is four times more likely to get hurt again.

In order to solve this problem, we must know its causes and not just look for a cure. In our modern lifestyle, labor-intensive work has been significantly reduced and replaced by automation. Our physical body, which has evolved over millions of years to be mobile, has started to degenerate and weaken quickly.

In order to prevent further loss of our back strength, first we must study our lifestyles. No matter what, we will always be a part of nature and must follow the “natural way”—the Dao. Chinese qi-gong was developed by following the Dao, discerned through observation of the relationships between nature and humanity. It is a science with a solid theoretical and empirical foundation.

The most fundamental principle of Chinese medicine is the concept of qi, known today in the West as bioelectricity. Illnesses are diagnosed by evaluating the condition of the body’s qi and interpreting the visible physical symptoms. According to Chinese medicine, when the need for qi and its supply in the body start to become unbalanced, the physical body is affected and can be damaged. This can happen both if the body is too yin (deficient in qi) or

too yang (having an excess of qi). When practitioners of Chinese medicine diagnose any disease or condition, they explore how and where the qi is unbalanced. Once the qi imbalance is corrected and the qi returned to its normal level, the root cause of the illness has been removed. Acupuncture is a common method for adjusting the qi and preventing further physical damage. The qi level can also be raised or lowered for healing.

While Western medicine has developed according to the principle of diagnosing visible symptoms and curing visible physical damage, Chinese medicine may be more advanced in that it deals with the body's qi, the root of health. On the other hand, Chinese medicine is still far behind Western medicine in the study and research of the physical aspects of the human body. This can be seen in Western scientific methods and in the technology the West has developed. Because of the differences between the two systems of medicine, there are still large gaps in mankind's understanding of the body. I believe that if both medical cultures can learn and borrow from each other, these remaining gaps can soon be filled, and medicine as a whole will be able to take a giant step forward.

The ease of communication and the increased friendship among different cultures has given mankind an unprecedented opportunity to share such things as medical concepts. We should all take advantage of this and open our minds to the knowledge and experiences of other peoples. I sincerely hope that this takes place, especially in the field of medicine. This goal has been my motivation in writing this book. Because of my limited knowledge, I can offer only this little volume. I hope, however, that it generates widening ripples of interest in sharing and exchanging with other cultures.

In this book, we begin with the traditional Chinese approach to diagnosing and treating back pain. Next, in chapter 2, we will study the structure of our back, both physically and from Chinese

qi concepts. In chapter 3, the possible causes of back pain will be discussed. Chapter 4 will review treatments by Western doctors, and chapter 5 will summarize possible treatments of back pain by practitioners of Chinese medicine. Finally, qigong exercises for back pain and rehabilitation will be introduced in chapter 6.

How Do the Chinese Treat Back Pain?

1-1. Introduction

Qigong is the study of qi. This means that qigong actually covers a very wide field of research and includes the study of the three general types of qi (heaven qi, earth qi, and human qi) and their interrelationships. However, because the Chinese have traditionally paid more attention to the study of human qi, which is concerned with health and longevity, the term “qigong” has often been misunderstood and misused to mean only the study of human qi. Because so much attention has been given to human qi over thousands of years, human qigong has reached a very high level. Today it includes many fields such as acupuncture, herbal study, massage, cavity press, qigong exercises, martial arts, and even spiritual enlightenment.

In this chapter, I would like to summarize some of the methods commonly used in China to prevent back pain and to cure it. I would then like to focus on how qigong uses exercises and massage (including cavity press) to prevent and cure back pain.

1-2. Chinese Diagnosis and Treatment

Since the Western public tends to be unfamiliar with Chinese diagnosis, in this section we will first summarize the general diagnostic techniques in Chinese medicine. Then, we will review a

specific diagnosis for back pain. After this, we will discuss general treatments for back pain in Chinese medicine.

General Chinese Medical Diagnosis

When a person is sick, his qi circulation is irregular or abnormal—it has too much yin or too much yang. Because all qi channels are connected to the surface of the body, stagnant or abnormal qi flow will cause signs to show on the skin. Also, the sounds a sick person makes when speaking, coughing, or breathing are different from those of a healthy person. Chinese doctors therefore examine a patient's skin, particularly the forehead, eyes, ears, and tongue. They also pay close attention to the person's sounds. In addition, they ask the patient a number of questions about his daily habits, feeling, and activities to understand the background of the illness. Finally, the doctor feels the pulses and probes special spots on the body to further check the condition of specific channels. Therefore, Chinese diagnosis is divided into four principal categories: 1. looking (wang zhen), 2. listening and smelling (wen zhen), 3. asking (wen zhen), and 4. palpation (qie zhen).

Obviously, Chinese medicine takes a somewhat different approach to diagnosis than Western medicine. Chinese doctors treat the body as a whole, analyzing the cause of the illness from the patient's appearance and behavior. Often what the Chinese physician considers important clues or causes are viewed by the Western doctor as symptomatic or irrelevant, and vice versa.

Next, we will briefly discuss the above four Chinese diagnostic techniques.

Looking (Wang Zhen)

Looking at the spirit and inspecting the color.

1. General appearance: Examine the facial expression, muscle tone, posture, and general spirit.

Understanding Our Back

2-1. Introduction

In order to maintain the health of our back, or solve back pain problems, it is important to study the anatomical structure of our back, especially the spine. From this study, we can better understand the problem and its possible causes. In addition, according to Chinese medical science, many back pain problems may also be caused by qi imbalance or stagnation in the spine or back muscles. Therefore, if we are wise, we will examine our back from both a Western physical understanding and also from the Eastern notion of qi distribution in our back.

2-2. The Qi Network in Our Back

We have two bodies, the physical body and the qi body (or bioelectric body). The physical body can be seen, but qi can only be felt. The qi body is the vital source of the physical body (i.e., any alive cells) and the foundation of our lives. The qi body is not only related to our cells but also to our thinking and spirit, because it is the main energy source for maintaining the brain's functioning. Therefore, any qi imbalance or stagnation will be the root and cause of any physical sickness or mental disorder.

Western medical science has long been studying the physical body and ignoring the qi body for the most part. Although this has begun to change in recent decades, the scientific understanding of the qi body and how it affects our health and longevity is still in its

infancy. Under these circumstances, we may still accept the ancient Chinese understanding of our body's qi network.

In this section, we will first briefly describe this network. Then, we will focus on the central energy system and central energy lines discovered through Chinese qigong and its possible linkage to newer scientific discoveries.

Twelve Primary Qi Channels and the Eight Vessels

From the understanding of Chinese medicine, the qi circulatory system in a human body includes eight vessels (ba mai), twelve primary qi channels (shi er jing), and thousands of secondary channels branching out from the primary channels (luo). On two of the vessels (governing and conception vessels) and the twelve primary qi channels, there are more than seven hundred acupuncture cavities through which the qi level in the channels can be adjusted and regulated. From this qi adjustment, the qi circulation in the body, especially in the internal organs, can be regulated into a harmonious state, the body's sickness can be cured, and health can be maintained. Here, we will briefly review these three circulatory networks. If you are interested in learning more about this qi network, you may refer to Chinese acupuncture books or my book *The Root of Chinese Qigong*, published by YMAA.

Eight Vessels (Ba Mai)

1. The eight vessels include four yang vessels and four yin vessels that balance each other.
2. The four yang vessels are as follows:
 - Governing Vessel (Du Mai)
 - Belt (or Girdle) Vessel (Dai Mai)
 - Heel Vessel (Yangchiao Mai)
 - Linking Vessel (Yangwei Mai)

What Are the Possible Causes of Back Pain?

3-1. Introduction

Back pain can be caused by an overstretching of, other trauma to, the back muscles or tendons. It can also be caused by a tearing or inflammation of the ligaments in the spine. However, the most common and serious cause of back pain is spasm of the muscles in the lower back area brought on by spinal disease, injury, or degeneration. Naturally, all of these problems can arise from many different circumstances. In this chapter, we will summarize the possible causes in Western terminology. Because lower back pain is the most common type of back pain, most of the research materials I have collected focus on this area.

3-2. The Possible Causes of Back Pain

In order to have a clear understanding about lower back pain, we can envision the spinal elements structured as a “three-joint complex,” with a disc and two facet joints at each level. If there are any changes in one element, the other two will also be affected. When a person assumes a normal relaxed, standing position, the vertebral bodies will be loosely piled up on top of each other. Whenever there is a disease that affects any one of the three elements, the intrinsic muscles will contract and develop protective splinting to prevent any microinstability that may occur. This can result in ischemia

from prolonged contraction, and the muscles can begin to ache, lose tone, and eventually atrophy.

Types of Pain

The prime symptom of spine problems is pain. Pain is the most common signal the body uses to notify your brain about the problem of qi imbalance or possible physical damage to your body. Pain generated from structures other than the spinal cord or nerve roots can be classified as local, referred, and muscular. If you are able to identify the type of pain you have, you may be able to better pinpoint the problem.

Local Pain

Local pain usually results from the irritation of nerve endings at the site of the pathologic process. It is usually steady and aching and may occur off and on, particularly when the involved structure is moved. Local pain is commonly associated with tenderness to palpation or percussion. The site of local pain can be diagnosed relatively easier than other causes of back pain.

For example, metastatic tumors and osteoporotic collapse of a vertebral body can cause pain at the site of the lesion by irritating the nerve endings in the periosteum surrounding the vertebrae body. However, those metastatic tumors involving the vertebral body that do not upset the periosteum are usually painless. Other than the neck and lower back, tumors also often strike the thoracic area, and osteoporotic vertebral collapse also tends to affect the structurally weak thoracic vertebral bodies.

Intervertebral discs may also cause local pain when they compress nerve endings in the annulus fibrosus or posterior longitudinal ligament. Most spine pain from mechanical causes, such as a herniated disc, occur either in the neck or lower back because these structures are more mobile and more subject to injury.

Qigong for Back Pain

5-1. Introduction

Before proceeding any further, we would first like to discuss the attitude you must have in your practice. Quite frequently, people who are ill are reluctant to get involved in the healing process. This is especially true for back pain patients. Both Western and traditional Chinese physicians have had difficulty persuading people to get involved in regular exercise or qigong. The main reason for this reluctance is that the patients are afraid of pain and therefore believe that these kinds of exercise are harmful. In order to conquer this obstacle to your healing, you must understand the theory of healing and the reason for practicing. Only then will you have the confidence necessary for continued practice. Remember, a physician may have an excellent prescription for your illness, but if you don't take the medicine, it won't do you any good.

Another factor that has caused the failure of many a potential cure is giving up too soon. Because the healing process is very slow, it is very easy to become impatient or to think the process is not working. Very often in life, we will know exactly what it is that we need to do, but because we are controlled by the emotional parts of our minds, we end up either not doing what we need to or not doing it right. Either way, our efforts have all been in vain.

It seems that most of the time our “emotional mind” (xin) and “wisdom mind” (yi) are in opposition. In China there is a proverb: “You are your own biggest enemy.” This means that your emotional mind often wants to go in the opposite direction from what your

wisdom mind knows is best. If your wisdom mind is able to conquer and govern your emotional mind, then there is nothing that can stop you from doing anything you want. Usually, however, your emotional mind makes you lazy, causes you to feel embarrassment, and destroys your willpower and perseverance. We always know that our clear-headed wisdom mind understands what needs to be done, but too often, we surrender to our emotional mind and become a slave of our emotions. When this happens, we usually feel guilty deep down in our hearts, and we try to find a good excuse so that we won't have to feel so guilty.

The first step when you decide to practice qigong is to strengthen your wisdom mind and use it to govern your emotional mind. Only then will you have enough patience and perseverance to keep practicing. You can see that the first key to successful training is not the techniques themselves but rather your self-control. I sincerely believe that as long as you have strong will, patience, and perseverance, there is nothing that can't be accomplished.

Forming the habit of practicing on a regular basis actually represents changing your lifestyle. Regulating your life through qigong can not only cure your back pain and restrengthen your spine, but it can also keep you healthy and make both your mental and physical lives much happier.

In this chapter, we will introduce some qigong practices that have proven to have great success in curing and preventing back pain. Although there are four fields of Chinese treatment for back pain, as mentioned earlier, because I am not qualified or experienced in the area of herbal and acupuncture treatments, I will focus on only qigong exercise. Still, I would like to remind you that among the four Chinese treatment methods, even though the other methods can alleviate pain, only qigong exercise is able to restrengthen and rebuild the strong root of the healthy spine.

In the next section, we will discuss a few important training procedures and keys. Without understanding these essential keys

to training, the effectiveness of your practice will be shallow. In chapter 6, qigong exercises for back pain will be introduced for the reconditioning of your back. If you have a hard time learning these movements, you may also obtain a video that will demonstrate the movements clearly.

5-2. Important Training Keys

In this section, we will first address the five important regulating procedures for successful qigong training. Understanding these five factors will lead you to a deep level of practice. Naturally, the results will also be much greater.

After this, we will summarize some important keys for qigong practice. If you can comprehend these keys, you will have grasped the secret of qigong practice.

Five Regulatings (Wu Tiao)

1. Regulating the Body

Before you start your qigong exercises, you should first calm down your mind and use this calm mind to bring your body into a calm and relaxed state. Naturally, you should always be concerned with your mental and physical centers. Only then will you be able to find your balance. When you have both mental and physical relaxation, centering and balance, you will be both natural and comfortable. This is the key to regulating your body.

When you relax, you should learn to relax deeply into your internal organs and especially the muscles that enclose the organs. In addition, you must also place your mind on the joints that are giving you trouble. The more you can bring your mind deep into the joint and relax it, the more qi will circulate smoothly and freely to repair the damage.

2. Regulating the Breathing

As mentioned before, breathing is the central strategy in qigong practice. According to qigong theory, when you inhale, you lead qi inward, and when you exhale, you lead qi outward. This is our natural process and we instinctually make use of it. For example, when you feel cold in the wintertime, in order to keep from losing qi out of your body, you naturally inhale more than you exhale to lead the qi inward, which also closes the pores in the skin. However, in the summertime when you are too hot, you naturally exhale more than you inhale in order to lead qi out of your body. When you do this, you start to sweat, and the pores open.

In qigong practice, generally, you want to lead the qi to the internal organs and bone marrow, so you must learn how to use inhalation to lead the qi inward. In addition, you would also like to lead the qi outward to the skin surface and beyond to strengthen your guardian qi (wei qi). Sometimes called protective qi, your guardian qi is a protective shield against negative qi influences around you.

When you use qigong to cure your back pain, you must learn how to inhale and exhale deeply and calmly so that you can lead the qi deep into the joints and also outward to dissipate the excess or stagnant qi that has accumulated in the joints. Therefore, in addition to relaxing when you practice, you should always remember to inhale and exhale deeply. When you inhale, place your mind deep in the joint, and when you exhale, lead the qi to the surface of the skin.

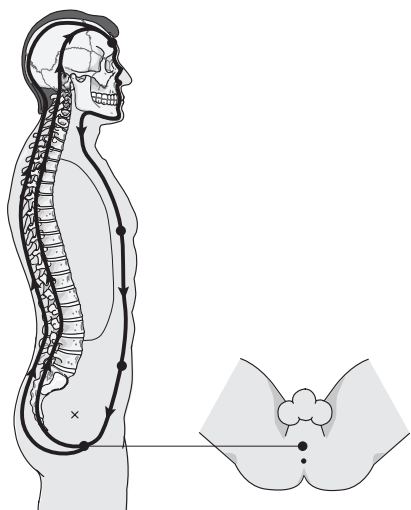
There are more than ten different methods of breathing in Chinese qigong practice. However, there are only two that are commonly used in our daily life. One is called abdominal breathing, or Buddhist breathing, and the other is called reverse abdominal breathing, or Daoist breathing. A key component, unique to Eastern training, is the use of the huiyin cavity (perineum). Traditionally, a master would not reveal this secret of huiyin control to any

student until he was completely trusted by the master. It is shared with you in hopes that the deeper training be sustained.

- In normal abdominal breathing, when you inhale, gently push out your abdomen.



- When you exhale, withdraw the abdomen.



■ The Huiyin Cavity (Co-1)
 (© LifeArt Collection of Images, Columbus, OH)

In order to fill up the qi to an abundant level in the lower abdominal area, when you inhale, you should also gently push your



■ In reverse abdominal breathing, when you inhale, the abdomen is gently pulled inward, and when you exhale, the abdomen is gently pushed outward.

Qigong Exercises

EXTERNAL QIGONG IS ALSO called dan (external elixir) qigong, because it emphasizes external physical movements and uses the mind to lead the qi to the extremities or local areas of the body either for healing or physical strengthening. External qigong can be classified as soft, soft-hard, and hard. In the soft category, the muscles and tendons are relaxed to a deep level while moving the joints. The main purpose of this soft external qigong is that through repeating the movements, the ligaments are exercised and the blood circulation in the deep places of the joints is improved.

Soft-hard external qigong moves the joints softly while twisting the joints or slightly tensing the tendons in the joint areas. The main purpose of this qigong is to strengthen the structure of the joints, such as ligaments and tendons. Again, through repeating the movements, the joints are conditioned gradually. Any injury in the joints can be repaired due to the enhanced qi and blood circulation.

Finally, hard external qigong is used to build up the strength and endurance of the muscles and tendons. Normally, only the physical tension can be seen externally. This qigong is not too much different from that practiced in the lifting of weights. The only difference is the use of the mind. In qigong, the mind is used to lead the qi to the muscular body first before it is tensed. From this mind and body coordination, the efficiency and effectiveness of exercises can be enhanced to a higher level. As mentioned earlier, this is called the unification of the internal and external.

Past experience teaches that in order to improve the qi and blood circulation in the deep places of the joints, we must first loosen up the joints. After loosening up the joints, a gentle and firm stretching should follow in order to open up the joints, especially if there is any injury or pain in them. Then, correct joint movements should be done repeatedly until the joints are warm. Finally, joint-loosening exercises should be used to lead the qi away from the joints.

Next, we will introduce qigong exercises for back pain. Before you start, you should recognize an important fact. After your exercise, you may find that your back or torso muscles are more sore and painful than before. This is quite normal. There are two reasons for this. First, you are exercising muscles and tendons that you seldom exercised before. Their condition is weak. Therefore, you should start the following exercises with only a few repetitions at first. Only if you feel stronger should you increase the number of repetitions. That means you are conditioning your physical body from weak to strong.

Second, after you exercise, the circulation of the qi and blood will be enhanced. This will enliven your nervous system at the local area and make it more sensitive. When this happens, you will experience soreness. You should not be discouraged by this. Treat it as a challenge. Remember, the more you move, the better your physical condition will become. However, should you feel sharp pain, burning, tingling, or a pain that radiates down into your legs, you should again reduce the number of repetitions and consult with your doctor.

6-1. Loosening Up the Lower Back

The main goal is to loosen up any tightness in the waist area caused from back pain. When you are doing the loosening-up exercises,

you should breath naturally. Do not hold your breath. Holding your breath will make your muscles tense.



- Place both arms right in front of your chest with palms facing downward. Then, turn your body from side to side gently. This will loosen up the torso muscles and excite them gradually. Repeat about six times to each side.

- Continue to keep both your arms right in front of your chest. Loosen up your torso by moving your hips forward to generate an upward wave motion while circling both your arms upward, forward, and then downward in a continuous motion. The intention of this movement is to move the torso gently to loosen up the muscles.





- Place your hands on your waist and then circle your waist horizontally. Circle in one direction and then the other, a few times in each direction. If you experience any pain, make the circles smaller. However, if you feel comfortable and there is not too much pain, you may increase the size of the circular motion and also the number of circles. This will loosen up the lower back area and the hip joints. Only you can decide how big the circle should be.

6-2. Stretching

After you have loosened up your waist area, you should start to stretch your torso. If you stretch your torso correctly, you will stimulate the cells into an excited state, and this will improve qi and blood circulation. This is the key to maintaining the health of the physical body. However, when you stretch, you should treat your muscles, tendons, and ligaments like a rubber band. Stretch gently and gradually. If you stretch the rubber band too much and too fast, it will break. For muscles, tendons, and ligaments, that means the

Index

- abdomen, 6, 103–105, 130–133,
136, 140–141, 164
- abdominal breathing, 102–105
- acetaminophen, 87
- acupressure, 23, 158
- acupuncture, xxviii, 1, 6, 9, 11–14,
16, 26, 30, 35, 39, 100, 153,
157–166
- acupuncture cavities, 11, 26, 30,
35, 39, 158
- aging, xxi, 10, 16–18, 68, 71, 126
- air, 168
- ankylosing spondylitis, 81
- arthritis, 14, 42, 70–71, 81, 125,
170, 173
- asking, 2, 5, 8, 163
- aspiration percutaneous lumbar
discectomy, 91
- back pain, 1–2, 8–9, 11–16, 19–22,
25, 41–42, 51, 55, 58, 63–65,
67–69, 71, 77, 80–86, 88–90,
92–93, 95, 97–102, 106, 110,
112, 116, 126–128, 130, 132,
134, 149, 153, 165, 170, 173
- back school, 89
- back, anatomy, 1–2, 6, 8–9, 11–17,
19–22, 25, 31, 39, 41–43, 49,
51, 53–55, 58–59, 63–65,
67–69, 71–72, 77, 80–86,
88–102, 106, 110, 112, 116,
118, 120–123, 126–128,
130–132, 134–135, 143–144,
146–147, 149, 151, 153,
164–165, 170
- baguazhang, 170, 172
- balance, 3, 17, 26, 31, 74, 77, 93–94,
96, 101, 109, 111
- baliao (B-31–34), 157
- Becker, Dr. Robert O., 24
- bed rest, xix, 84, 86, 90, 98
- belt (or girdle) vessel, 26–27, 29,
31, 158
- bioelectricity, xxvii, 11–12, 18, 20,
31, 40, 58
- blood, xxiii, xxv, 5, 9–10, 14, 16,
23, 38, 41–42, 57, 61, 66, 68,
86, 95, 115–116, 118, 122,
126, 132, 136, 148
- blood circulation, xxiii, 9–10, 14,
16, 23, 86, 115–116, 118, 126,
132, 136
- Body Electric, The*, 24
- bone fracture, 14, 71
- bone marrow, 20–21, 23, 38, 41,
75, 102, 160
- braces, 89

brain, 17, 25, 30, 40, 49, 54, 57–58, 64, 67, 75, 92, 122, 170
 breathing, 2, 5, 9, 15, 17–18, 21, 57, 68, 102–108, 110, 127, 137, 144, 147, 163–164, 170, 174
 bubbling well cavity
 Buddhism, 112

 carcinoma, 65
 carisoprodol, 87
 cauda equina, 54
 cause of pain, xxi, xxvii
 cavity press massage, 11
 changqianq (Gv-1), 157
 channels, qi, 2–4, 11, 23, 26, 29–31, 34, 38–39, 157, 159–162, 166
 chengfu (B-50), 157
 chengshan (B-57)
 Chinese medicine, 1–2, 6–7, 14–16, 20, 26, 29, 40–42, 73, 92, 111, 130, 161–165
 chiropractor, 85
 ciliao (B-32), 157–158
 conception vessel, 28, 30, 159, 161
 corsets, 89
 cyclobenzaprine, 87

 Da Mo, 170
 dan tian, 18, 31, 40, 68, 107, 111, 130–131, 158, 161, 164–166
 Dao, definition, xxvii, 73, 106, 158
 degeneration, xxi, 5, 16, 41, 63, 68–70, 72, 80, 84
 degenerative spondylolisthesis, 72
 diagnosis, xii, xvi, 1–5, 7–8, 13–14, 16, 65, 67, 85
 dian xue, 11, 158, 167
 diaphragm, 106, 133–135
 diet, 6, 72
 discs, 50, 52–54, 60–65, 69, 79–80, 91
 discectomy, 91
 durtitis, 66

 earth qi, 1
 Eight Pieces of Brocade, xiii, 171, 173
 electromotive force, 21, 40, 106
 emotion, 99–100
 emotional mind, 99–100, 105, 109
 emotions, 82, 100, 105, 108
 enlightenment, 1, 30
 enthesopathy, 72
 exercise, 13, 15–16, 20–22, 42, 68, 72–76, 79, 88–89, 94, 99–100, 116, 122, 126, 130–132, 134–137, 140–144, 147, 153
 exostosis, 70
 eyes, vii, 2, 5–6, 18

 five animal sports, 172
 Flexeril, 87
 food, 41, 79
 funicular pain, 65–67

 gall bladder channel, 32, 34, 166
 genetic predisposition, 81

governing vessel, 26–27, 30–31,
38, 157–158, 160
gut, 40

heart channel, 34, 36, 162
heartburn, 87
heat, application, 5–6, 14, 57, 83,
86, 107, 157, 160–161
heaven qi, 1, 158, 163
herbal treatment, 167
herniated disc, 64, 90
hormones, 17–18
huantiao (GB-30), 159
huiyin (Co-1), 102, 104–105, 159
human qi, 1, 73, 174

ibuprofen, 87
ice, application of, vii, 14, 83, 86
immune system, xxii, xxv, 15, 17,
19, 22, 41, 67, 136
intestines, 42, 131
iron board bridge, 149–151, 163
Iron Sand Palm
ischemia, 63, 66

jianjing (GB-21), 159
jiexi (S-41), 159
jing, xiii, 26, 31–38, 132, 159,
161–162, 165–166
juliao (GB-29), 159

kidney channel, 34, 37, 166
knee problems, 76

laminectomy, 90–91
large intestine channel, 32, 162
laziness, vii, xx
legs, 29, 49, 76, 82, 96, 116, 138,
149
li, 160, 167–168, 171
lifestyle, xix, xxi, xxvii, 5, 9, 73,
75–77, 88, 92, 94, 100
lifting, 80, 93, 95–97, 105, 115,
144, 150
ligament, 14, 64, 72, 79, 88
ligamentous strain, 65
listening, 2, 5, 163
liu he ba fa
liver channel, 35, 38, 166
lordosis, 78–79
lower back, 41–43, 49, 58–59,
63–65, 68, 77, 80–82, 84,
88, 90, 93–98, 110, 116, 118,
127–128, 130–132, 143,
146, 149, 153
lumbago, 8, 165
lumbar muscle, 65
lumbar spondylosis, 68, 71
lumbar strain
lumbosacral pain, 8, 165
lung channel, 34–35, 162

martial arts, 1, 11, 105–106, 112,
150, 158–164, 167–171, 174
massage, vi, xxiii, 1, 9–16, 22–24,
83, 86, 112, 134, 157–158,
160–161, 163, 170, 172

- meditation, xxii, 30, 68, 107, 149, 170
- metastatic, 64
- methocarbamol, 87
- mingmen (Gv-4), 130, 160
- muscle, xix, 2–3, 14, 20–21, 61, 65, 67, 77–79, 82, 86–89, 94, 97, 124–125, 170
- muscles, 20, 25, 40–41, 49, 52–54, 57, 61, 63–68, 74–77, 79–81, 83–85, 88, 93–94, 96–97, 101, 106, 115–120, 122–127, 130–132, 134–135, 148–149
- neck, 50, 54, 64, 67, 71, 94, 97, 122–125, 147
- nei dan, 160
- nerve root compromise, 66
- nerves, 31, 38, 46, 49–50, 54–55, 57–58, 60, 69, 71, 90
- nervous system, 31, 40, 48–49, 51, 55–59, 116
- neuritis, 66
- normal abdominal breathing, 103
- obesity, 79, 95
- occupation
- organs, 3–5, 7, 10, 20–23, 26, 30, 39, 48–49, 55, 57–58, 75, 101–102, 127–128, 133–134, 163–165
- osteomyelitis
- osteophytosis, 71
- osteoporosis, 70–71, 89
- pain, 1–2, 8–16, 19–22, 25, 41–42, 49, 51, 54–55, 58, 63–69, 71, 77, 80–93, 95, 97–102, 106, 110, 112, 116, 118–119, 126–128, 130, 132, 134, 144, 149, 153, 165, 170, 173
- palpation, 2, 6–7, 64, 67, 161
- pericardium channel, 35, 37, 160, 162
- pituitary gland, 18
- posture, xix, xx, 2, 8, 77, 79, 82, 84, 93, 145
- prevention, xi, xii, xv, 15, 73, 88, 92, 170
- prolapsed disc
- pulse, 6–7
- qi, 1–2, 5, 8–18, 20–23, 25–26, 29–31, 35, 38–42, 58–59, 64, 68, 73–75, 101–102, 104–111, 115–116, 118, 122, 126–127, 130–132, 136, 142, 144, 148, 157–166, 174
- balance, 3, 17, 26, 31, 74, 77, 93–94, 96, 101, 109, 111
- body, 2, 4–5, 7, 9–26, 30–31, 39–42, 49, 51, 53–59, 64, 68, 71–73, 75–77, 79, 82, 89, 91–97, 101–102, 105–111, 115–120, 122, 126–128, 131–132, 134–135, 142, 144, 151, 157–161, 163
- channels, 2–4, 11, 23, 26, 29–31, 34, 38–39, 157, 159–162, 166

- circulation, xxiii, 2, 5, 9–16,
 20–21, 23, 26, 31, 38, 58, 68,
 75, 86, 105, 111, 115–116,
 118, 126, 131–132, 136,
 170, 174
 concept, xx, xxvii, 16, 20,
 85, 88
 definition, 157, 160
 massage, vi, xxiii, 1, 9–16,
 22–24, 83, 86, 112, 134,
 157–158, 160–161, 163, 170,
 172
 original, xxii, 13, 130, 132, 158,
 164–165
 scientific explanation
 stagnation, 10, 14, 23, 25, 127,
 132, 161, 163
 qigong, 1, 8–10, 12–13, 15–24, 26,
 30–31, 42, 58–59, 68, 73–75,
 92, 99–102, 105–113, 115–
 116, 126–127, 130, 140,
 143–144, 148, 151, 153, 157,
 160–165, 167–174
 Buddhist, 102, 112
 Daoist, 102, 112, 164
 definition, 157, 160
 exercises, 1, 8–9, 13, 15, 20–22,
 42, 68, 74–75, 82, 88–89,
 93–94, 98, 101, 112, 115–116,
 126–127, 130, 132, 139, 142,
 144, 147–148, 153, 163, 171,
 173
 medical, 2, 5–8, 24–25, 51, 74,
 79, 83, 85, 88, 90, 98, 107,
 112, 153, 165
 nei dan, 160
 religious, 30
 scholar, xx
 training, 10–11, 17, 21–23, 92,
 100–103, 105, 112, 126, 144,
 148–151, 161, 163–165, 167,
 169, 171–173
 wai dan, 163
 radicular pain, 65–67
 referred pain, 65–66
 regulating the body, 20, 101, 163
 regulating the breath
 regulating the mind, 106, 163
 regulating the qi, 20, 29, 108, 163
 regulating the spirit, 108, 163
 relaxation, viii, 10, 20, 94, 101,
 128, 142, 160, 170
 reversed abdominal breathing
 risk factors, 67–68
 Robaxin, 87
 sciatica, 71, 98
 scoliosis, vii, 78–80
 self-massage
 shangliao (B-31), 157, 161
 Shaolin Temple, 126, 161
 shen, 34, 37, 109, 111, 161–162,
 165–166
 shenshu (B-23), 162
 shiatsu massage, 23
 shoes, 77, 97
 sickness, 8–10, 18–19, 22, 25–26,
 42, 73, 91–92, 106, 111, 127

skin, conductivity, 2–3, 7, 20, 38,
 49, 57, 86, 102, 160
 sleeping, 30, 40, 75, 79, 97
 small intestine channel, 32–33,
 162
 smoking, 80, 94–95, 98
 spasm, 14, 63, 67, 77–79, 81, 83
 spinal, vi, xxii, xxiii, xxv, 8, 15,
 30–31, 38, 40, 42, 45–46,
 49–52, 54–55, 57–58, 60,
 63–67, 69–71, 75–76, 81, 85,
 89–91, 94, 112–113, 126–127,
 136–137, 151, 165
 canal, 54, 69, 74, 90–91
 cord, 30–31, 38, 40, 45–46,
 49–50, 54–55, 57–58, 64–67,
 69, 71, 75, 90
 disc, 51–53, 60–61, 63–65,
 68–69, 71, 80, 84, 89–91, 95
 fusion, 91
 manipulation, i, 89
 stenosis, 65, 69, 90–91
 spirit, xii, 2, 17–18, 25, 30–31,
 107–109, 111, 153, 161–163, 165
 spleen channel, 34, 36, 166
 spondylitis, 70, 81
 spondylolisthesis, 72
 spondylolysis
 spondyloptosis, 72
 spondylosis, 68, 71
 sports, xii, xx, 79–80, 172
 stomach channel, 32, 166
 strength, 7–9, 12–13, 15–18, 20,
 40–41, 68, 77, 79–80, 86,
 88–89, 93–94, 97, 112, 115,
 126, 132, 134, 148–151, 153,
 163
 stress, vii, 20, 42, 51, 53, 60, 69, 77,
 82, 94–96, 153
 stretching, xvii, 66, 88, 116,
 118–120, 122, 124–125,
 146
 surgery, xix, 84, 90, 95
 surgery and acupuncture
 sway-back
 symptoms, xxvii, xxviii, 8–9,
 12, 67, 69–71, 73, 82,
 87, 89
 taijiquan, xiii, xxii, 112, 126, 150,
 158, 162, 167–169, 171
 thrusting, 28–30, 40–41, 75,
 127–128, 158
 tongue, 2–4
 transcutaneous electrical nerve
 stimulation (TENS), 87–88
 treatment, 1, 8–9, 13–14, 16, 19,
 83–86, 88–90, 92, 94, 100,
 153, 163, 167
 triple burner channel, 32–33,
 162
 tui na massage, 10
 tumors, 64
 urinary bladder channel, 33, 39
 venous obstruction, 66
 vertebrae, 8, 15, 38, 41–42, 49–54,
 59–61, 64, 68, 89, 91, 96,

- 126, 128, 130, 132–136,
144–145
- vessels, 26, 28–30, 41, 105,
157–158, 161, 164–165
- vibration, 80
- wai dan qigong, 163
- walking, vii, 65, 76, 97, 142–143
- weight lifting
- weizhong (B-54), 163
- wisdom mind, 99–100, 108–109,
111, 165
- work, 82, 85, 89, 91, 97, 109,
158–159, 168
- X-rays, 7, 14, 86
- xialiao (B-34), 157, 164
- xin, 34–37, 99, 109–110, 162,
164
- yang, 2, 5–7, 17, 26–27, 29–34, 39,
41–42, 68, 75, 110, 142,
157–160, 162–164, 166–174
- belt vessel, 31
- channels, i, 2–4, 11, 23, 26,
29–31, 34, 38–39, 157,
159–162, 166
- heel vessel, 26–29, 164–165
- linking vessel, 26–29, 164–165
- yanglingquan (GB-34), 164
- yaobeitengtong, 8, 165
- yaojitong, 8, 165
- yaokaotong, 8, 165
- yaosuan, 8, 165
- yi, 99, 109–111, 131, 160, 164–165
- yin, xxvii, 2, 7, 12, 17, 26, 28–31,
34–38, 41, 68, 75, 105,
110–111, 162, 165–166,
173
- yin channels, 31, 34
- yin heel vessel, 165
- yin linking vessel, 165
- yin vessels, 26, 28–29, 105
- yin-yang balance
- yongquan (K-1), 165
- zhibian (B-49), 166
- zhongliao (B-33), 157, 166