

balanced
fitness

10-minute Qigong Wake-up

Light up your morning with simple movements from an ancient Chinese practice

Qi ("chee") = vital energy
GONG = practice of cultivation

BENEFITS
increases energy flow
enhances flexibility
promotes balance
improves circulation
reduces stress
balances yin and yang



What if, instead of stumbling into the shower every morning, you could greet the day with fresh, engaged energy—and a little fun? One way to get your day flowing is by doing some simple qigong exercises and deep breathing first thing in the morning. These slow, graceful, dancelike movements and poses can not only calm your “monkey mind” but also loosen you up and lift your mood.

One of the major branches of Traditional Chinese Medicine, qigong has long been associated with youthfulness, vitality, and longevity. Those who have experienced its many benefits claim that qigong can do everything from improving organ function to relieving symptoms of depression. Qigong expert Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac., author of *Qigong for Staying Young*, designed the following light-hearted workout to energize your morning and sustain you all day.

1

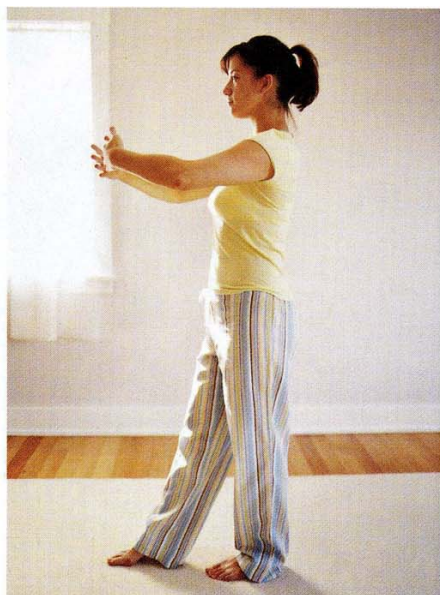
< Shaking the Tree

2 minutes

This warm-up is spontaneous and has no precise form.

Standing comfortably, simply shake out your body however you feel most comfortable. You can start with your lower body, with the legs and feet, or your upper body, moving from the neck and shoulders down. By gyrating freely, you release stagnant energy in all joints and stiff areas of the body. Breathe naturally throughout.

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2

<Standing Like a Tree

1 minute on each side

This standing meditation unblocks the flow of *qi*, giving you the experience of "motion within stillness."

Extend your right foot forward and rest it lightly, heel raised slightly off the floor, putting your weight on your left foot. Extend your arms at shoulder height, as if you are holding a big ball, with your right hand an inch in front of your left, fingers relaxed. Feel the energy pulsing through the space between your hands. Let your body expand and contract with each breath. Now reverse, with left hand and foot extended, left hand in front of right.

3

>Monkey Stretches Up and Down

2 minutes

This exercise promotes the circulation of *qi* in the lungs and heart. It also increases flexibility of the spine by stretching it in opposite directions.

1 | stand with your knees straight but not locked and your feet together. Interlace your fingers, palms upward.

2 | as you inhale, turn your palms out, raise your arms, and turn your face to the sky. Continue stretching upward toward the sky as you complete your inhalation.

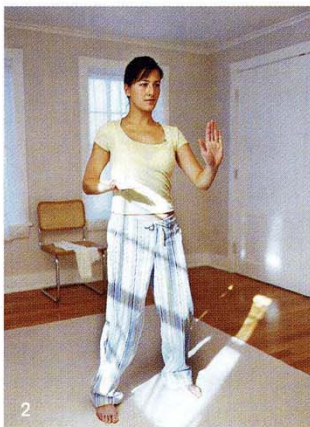
3 | as you exhale, lower your arms and turn your clasped hands palms down. Bend forward at the hips—not the waist—with a flat back, stretching both arms toward your toes, and gaze toward the earth. Repeat 12 times, for a total of 12 deep, complete breaths.



"Qigong releases negative and blocked energies, loosens your joints and promotes flexibility, and balances your yin and yang—what better way to start your day?"

—Shoshanna Katzman, L.Ac.

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4

< Balancing Monkey

2 minutes

This exercise promotes calm and power, balancing yin and yang forces within you.

1 | stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, left palm at your hip facing up, right arm in front of you at shoulder height as if you're pushing something away; right arm is slightly bent, hand open. Chin is lifted, as if your head is suspended from above.

2 | inhale as you flip your right hand, palm up, and retract it; exhale as you push your left hand outward. Repeat this movement slowly, switching hands on the inhale and pushing out on the exhale. Repeat 12 times, for a total of 24 breaths.

5

> Back Swinging Monkey

2 minutes

This exercise nurtures the heart and spirit and balances the mind. It can lower high blood pressure, combat fatigue, and help with weight management.

1 | begin with feet together and hands relaxed at your sides. On the inhale, turn your upper body to the left and swing both arms out, right arm forward.

2 | swing your arms through the center on the exhale and reverse, turning to the right and swinging arms up in the other direction. Alternate from side to side 16 times, for a total of 16 deep breaths.



6

< Store Your Qi

1-2 minutes

After your qigong workout, it's important to store your qi, uniting the energy in your body and creating a protective shield between you and the outside world.

To close the circle of energy and consolidate your qi, place your hands over your belly, two inches below your navel. Breathe naturally. Finally, as the saying goes, "replace ten thousand thoughts with one thought," and let your energy flow. +

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"Qigong has taught me to flow through life with strength, inner knowingness, and joy," says **SHOSHANNA KATZMAN** ("The Beautiful Movement," page 66). "It will give you an ageless body and a peaceful mind." Drawing on almost 30 years as a qigong/tai chi instructor and 23 years as an acupuncturist, Katzman is the author of *Qigong for Staying Young: A Simple 20-Minute Workout to Cultivate Your Vital Energy* (Avery/Penguin, 2003) and companion DVD and video (qigong4everyone.com). Katzman, who lives in Little Silver, New Jersey, with her husband and three children, teaches and practices her healing arts at the Red Bank Acupuncture and Wellness Center. As the first female president of the National Qigong Association, she is dedicated to bringing qigong to the mainstream. "It's a medicine," she says, "one that you give yourself."

