

Qi Gong and Asthma

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Over ten years ago, I began attending a Tai Chi and Qi Gong class with a friend of mine. She had signed up for it, didn't want to go alone, and I thought it wouldn't hurt me to learn how to relax a little. Six months into the class my asthma disappeared completely. I was stunned. Asthma had been part of my life since I was a child. My brother and sister had asthma. I had no idea that you could even get rid of it or that I was doing something that would heal it. That was the beginning of my dedication to the field of Chinese exercise. The elimination of my asthma was a great mystery to me at the time; now I know how it happened and how to help others achieve the same goal.

Asthma can relate to several different imbalances in the energy systems of the body, most commonly the Lung, Kidney, or Spleen energy or any combination of these three. Please note that when talking about energy systems in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the common practice is to associate them with organ names but that does not imply that there is a physical problem with the actual organ in the body.

For the individual with Lung energy related asthma, there could also be a variety of other Lung symptoms. If the lung energy is involved, the asthma symptoms might get worse in the fall, there could be sinus problems and eczema or psoriasis as well. There could also be trouble with the large intestine. Emotionally, the individual might have experienced some significant losses in their life, feel sad frequently, or have a need to establish better emotional boundaries with other people. The best exercise to help with Lung related asthma is the Lung Sound exercise.

Lung Sound

Sit on the edge of a chair or your bed. Feet flat on the floor, knees at a 90 degree angle. Place your palms facing up on your lap, elbows out slightly and away from your body. There should be a small amount of space under your armpits, like you are holding a ping-pong ball there. Keep your back straight and relaxed and your chin in slightly. You can have your eyes closed or opened slightly.

You begin the form by raising your hands up in front of you, palms facing up. As your hands rise up, slowly turn them toward your body then down. When the hands get to a level above your head, turn the palms up to face the ceiling. The tips of the fingers of each hand should be lined up and facing each other. The elbows and shoulders should be rounded and relaxed. Feel the lungs expand in your chest. This posture is to help you feel your lungs in your chest.

Take a relaxed breath in and as you exhale, make the following sound. ASsssss@ like a snake hissing or steam coming out of a radiator. Look up slightly as you do this. Only one breath out as you make the sound. While you are making the sound, picture the negative emotions of sadness, grief or depression leaving your lungs. Picture them in any way you like, some people see this as a color or fog coming out of their lungs. When you have finished the breath and the sound, inhale and relax. Turn your hands palm down and slowly lower them down in front of your body to your lap. Place your hands back on your lap, palms facing up. Now, feel the positive emotion of courage growing in your lungs as they fill with the color white. The sadness that gets trapped inside the Lungs causes the body to contract energetically and the feeling of courage helps the body to expand back out. Relax as long as you want. Repeat as many times in a row as feels good and do this exercise two to three times per day.

In TCM it is said that the "Kidney grasps the air" meaning that the Kidney energy helps the air to flow deep down into the body. When the Kidney energy is out of balance the breath can become short or



Lung Sound
"Sssss"
Sadness => Courage
(White)

shallow and there can be coughing as well. For the individual with Kidney energy related asthma, symptoms might get worse in the winter or when exposed to cold air, the asthma might have begun when the person was a toddler or small child, or there might be a general weakness in the person. Emotionally this person might feel frozen or fearful. For this individual it is necessary to build the Kidney energy up again and the Dantian Meditation is the best technique for this.

The Dantian Meditation

To do the Dantian meditation, sit with your hands on your lap, palm down or facing your belly. Do not interlace your fingers, though. Feet flat on the floor, knees at a 90 degree angle. Keep your back straight and relaxed. Shoulders should be relaxed and chin in slightly. The arch in your lower back should be flattened slightly as well. The teeth are together without clenching the jaw. Touch the tip of your tongue to the roof of your mouth unless you have high blood pressure. If you have high blood pressure, place the tip of your tongue behind your bottom teeth inside your mouth. Put your mind on the Dantian which is about 1 2" below the belly button and centered inside the body. Breathe slowly and smoothly. Picture that the air goes all the way down to the Dantian. As you inhale, the belly expands, as you exhale the belly sinks back in naturally. Picture the coals of a fire glowing brightly deep in your belly. Imagine each breath you take is blowing on these coals making them brighter and warmer.

Spleen Sound

Continue this meditation for as long as is comfortable. You'll know that you are done if you feel like you need to get up and move around. Your mind will wander, but this is normal. Try not to be distracted by the thoughts that arise. Just let them go. The trick is not to create an entire conversation in your head. For example, when you remember you forgot to go to the grocery store, don't start planning what you'll get for dinner, just tell yourself you'll take care of it in a few more minutes.

The Spleen energy helps the body to maintain an appropriate amount of lubricating moisture but when it is out of balance problems of congestion, inflammation, and swelling can occur. For the individual with Spleen energy related asthma, symptoms might include coughing up phlegm, symptoms get worse when it is damp, or there could be problems with yeast overgrowth. Emotionally this person might tend to over think things, worry, feel overwhelmed, Astuck®, or needy. The following exercise should be done after the Lung Sound and begins with the hands on the lap, palm up.

Raise your hands up to the left side of your abdomen, just below where the ribs are. Push in gently as you exhale and make the following sound. ACwhooo.® This sound is a guttural spitting sound in the back of your throat like the sound of canned whipped cream (like Ready Whip) coming out of the plastic spout or the sound of a cappuccino machine. As you make the sound, picture the negative emotion of worry or thinking too much coming out of your spleen. When you have finished the sound. Relax and inhale and slowly lower your hands back to your lap and picture openness growing in your spleen as it fills with the color yellow. Relax as long as you want and repeat.

Diet is a very important factor for improving asthma. Cow's milk and its products should be avoided, especially ice cream. If you have asthma with phlegm then barley is good for you, if you have asthma with a dry cough, rice is better.

Foods that are helpful are chlorophyll, vitamin A rich foods like spirulina, apricot, pumpkin, carrot, mustard greens, and other green vegetables, Omega-3 fatty acids, almonds, and walnuts. As a general rule, please avoid any food which you know you are allergic to or don't digest well.



Spleen Sound
“Cwhooo”
Worry => Openness
(Yellow)

For those struggling with asthma, the simple act of breathing can be a physically and emotionally exhausting trial. Asthma becomes part of the individual's lifestyle and to get rid of the asthma

requires the individual to change their lifestyle. To improve your ease of breathing, do both exercises, the meditation, and the diet changes. Most people experience improvement within three to six months. Improvements will happen faster if you also receive Qi Gong Therapy or acupuncture treatments.

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