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Put Aside 5-10 Minutes a Day for Qigong

Where in your schedule can you find 5 to 10 minutes a day to destress, feel grounded, and do some self care?

First thing in the morning? When the students leave the school in the afternoon? Before bed?

You do not need any special training or equipment, just some uninterrupted time and a small space – either inside or outside.

Today's ReFresh introduces you to the practice of **qigong** (pronounced "chi gong").

What is Qigong

Qigong originated in China about 4,000 years ago and is based on principles of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). This ancient Chinese practice involves the cultivation and manipulation of qi (also spelled "chi" or "ki"), which is often translated as "life energy" or "vital energy." This energy is said to flow through our bodies and is believed to be responsible for our physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

According to TCM principles, a person's qi must flow throughout the body in order for people to feel their best. If qi becomes stagnant in certain areas, health problems may occur. Qigong uses simple poses and breathing patterns to promote a healthy flow of energy.

In most forms of qigong:

- Breath is slow, long, and deep. Breath patterns may switch from abdominal breathing to breathing that combines with speech sounds.

- Movements are typically gentle and smooth, aimed for relaxation.
- Mind regulation includes focusing one's attention and visualization.

Health Benefits of Qigong

While this ancient healing practice is widespread, there has been very little research to prove qigong's true impact. The research that has been done suggests that qigong improves balance and gait, and reduces stress levels.

Increased balance

Since qigong focuses on controlled, slow movements to improve awareness of your body in space, this helps to increase balance, muscular strength, and flexibility and makes qigong an accessible practice for all age groups.

Lower stress and anxiety

Qigong involves meditation, controlled breathing, and gentle movements, all of which have been shown to help lower stress and symptoms of anxiety.

Calm, controlled breathing tells your body that there is no immediate threat and activates the parasympathetic nervous system – the 'rest and digest' system. It also slows your body's stress response system. Learn more about your stress response system in this [Principled magazine article](#).

May lower risk of chronic disease

Although there has not been as much research in this area, this gentle form of exercise that emphasizes calm, meditative breathing has the potential to reduce stress on the body, increase blood flow, and improve overall fitness, all of which may lower the risk of chronic disease including type 2 diabetes and heart disease. However, more robust studies are needed.

Increased focus

Qigong requires a focus of the breath, mind, and body. Through regular practice, qigong may improve your ability to focus and concentrate by helping you learn to regulate thoughts in a more productive manner, similar to the practice of meditation.

Getting Started

Before introducing any new activity or exercise, it is best to speak with your healthcare provider to ensure that it is safe for you.

Here are some YouTube videos with qigong exercises for beginners. Set aside 10 minutes to try it and see how you feel. You may have found a great new way to destress, calm your body, and refresh!

Best 5 Qigong Exercises for Beginners 10 min: Video by Nick Joffree of Bioenergetic Health. Nick has an interesting background of recovery. I like this video, as he takes you through different calming exercises and explains as he goes about how the exercises are impacting the body and mind. His voice is very calming as well!

Qi Gong Warm Up Dr. Lam Technique, Ann Swanson Wellness – 5 min: Dr. Paul Lam appears to be a qigong master and has several videos online but they are very long. In this 5-minute video, Ann uses his techniques to music that introduces continuous flow and movement.

“Most Important” Qigong Exercises for Beginners: Video by Jeffery Chand of Qigong for Vitality. Jeff is a ‘local boy’ from Victoria and has several instructional videos online. I have selected two of his.

In the first video, linked above, Jeff offers a great explanation of what qigong is and how it supports your well-being, and then introduces **one** exercise to practice for 5 minutes. He explains that this exercise is the ‘superfood’ of qigong; if you only have 5 minutes, do THIS exercise to help multiple body systems.

The second video is 10 minutes long and takes you through several different exercises in which he explains the benefits of each.

Sources:

<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/qigong-what-you-need-to-know>

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/what-are-the-health-benefits-of-qigong/>

<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/qigong-meditation>

<https://www.qigongforvitality.com/>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Morandini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rochelle Morandini

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If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.

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