



Buzz, Body & Bites

A newsletter for actively aging adults
Virginia Cooperative Extension Family & Consumer Sciences
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Qigong for Healthy Aging: The Cleansing Breath

Qigong (pronounced chee gong) is a holistic and self-healing system that originated in China over 3,000 years ago as a branch of Traditional Chinese Medicine. It is a mind-body practice that improves one's mental and physical health by integrating movement, posture, awareness, and breathing. Soft and slow qigong movement opens the flow of energy in meridians ("energy paths") used in acupuncture. Qigong practice emphasizes relaxing the body and calming/ focusing the mind.

Research studies have shown that qigong is effective for ranging from relieving symptoms of chronic illnesses to improving the quality of life in older adults.

The Cleansing Breath is a breathing exercise to cleanse the body. Five to ten minutes of this practice will help you to calm your mind and energize the body. You can use this practice any time of your day.

1. In the Wuji posture (See side panel), inhale and arms are open and up.
2. Exhale and arms are down and breathe out all the way down to the feet.
3. When you exhale, scan down the body from the top of your head, forehead, eyes, nose, mouth, neck, shoulders, chest, belly, hips, thighs, knees, ankles, and the bottom of your feet.
4. Inhale and rise. When you're up, engage your core and imagine you're stacking up each disc in your spine.
5. Pay attention to the lower core and relax.

Helpful Hints:

- Repeat the cleansing breath for 5-10 minutes.
- Try to relax your body and feel any change in the body during the practice.
- Try to focus your attention on each cleansing breath.
- Try to visualize the energy flowing through your body.
- Let your awareness guide your hands.

Qigong is not for avoiding aging but can be incorporated into a lifestyle as a complementary strategy for promoting well-being and longevity.

Contributed by Dr. Young Ju, Associate Professor, Virginia Tech

Spiritual wellness

Spiritual wellness is expanding a sense of purpose and meaning in life, including one's morals and ethics. Be sure to make time for spiritual practices, which can include: religion, meditation, yoga, breathing, or another activity that supports a spiritual connection. Qigong is one way we can engage in our spiritual wellness.

Lemon Basil Ginger Ale

Ginger is a root vegetable with a robust and spicy flavor. It also has medicinal properties including anti-inflammatory, anti-emetic, and gastro-protective effects. This recipe is a refreshing and delicious way to get the benefits of ginger in your diet.

Source: <https://hr.umich.edu/sites/default/files/lemon-basil-ginger-ale.pdf>

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon agave syrup
- 1 tablespoon fresh basil, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon ginger root, freshly grated
- 2 cups sparkling mineral water

Instructions:

1. Wash hands and produce thoroughly.
2. In a small bowl or jar, combine lemon juice, agave syrup, basil, and ginger and steep for 30 minutes.
3. Strain and divide into two glasses.
4. Add sparkling water to each glass.
5. Add ice, if desired.
6. Garnish with a twist of lemon peel.

Exercise: Bicep Curl

Works the biceps and forearms

1. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, or sit in an armless chair with the back straight.
2. Hold dumbbells securely straight down at your sides, palms facing forward.
3. Breathe out as you slowly bend your elbows and lift the weights toward your chest. Try to meet your forearm to your bicep. Keep your elbows at your sides.
4. Hold the position for one second, then breathe slowly and lower your arms.
5. Repeat 10-15 times

Resources

SAMSHA's Creating a Healthier Life: <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/sma16-4958.pdf>

PARCI Lab LIFT exercises: <https://www.parcilab.org/lift>

Cleveland Clinic - Health Benefits of Qigong: <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/what-are-the-health-benefits-of-qigong>

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