

The Pal Dan Gum Exercises

Pal Dan Gum is a set of eight qigong exercises known and used in China and Korea for thousands of years to promote radiant health for people of all ages and abilities. These exercises are often referred to as the '*eight silken movements*' and have historically been used for healthful longevity and as an aid to spiritual development. They provide a natural method to stay active and fit while increasing the body's vital force. Upon completion, one feels refreshed, relaxed, and energized. They have and continue to be recommended to alleviate many symptoms and common ailments by traditional Oriental physicians throughout hospitals in China and Korea.

Pal Dan Gum practice requires simply five to ten minutes a day for improved health and increased spiritual and energetic awareness. With regular practice, these powerful exercises purify the shen (spirit), strengthen jing (vital essence), and balance qi (vital energy) flowing throughout the meridian pathways. These exercises also promote internal organ health and improved blood circulation. They also increase strength, flexibility, endurance of the body's muscles, tendons as well as optimal resilience and structure of bones and joints.

Prior to beginning practice of these eight Pal Dan Gum exercises, it is recommended for the practitioner take slow, gentle and rhythmical deep breaths while walking around quietly for a few minutes. Do so while eliminating extraneous thoughts to calm the mind and body. Be sure to breathe through the nose with mouth closed and tongue lightly touching the palate, then exhale through the nose. Focus the mind on the abdomen as the belly expands upon inhalation and deflates upon exhalation.

While performing the eight Pal Dan Gum exercises, concentrate completely on the motions, postures, and breathing. Keep eyes looking downward while moving gracefully, slowly and accurately from one posture to the next. Repeat each exercise as directed but also feel free to repeat one at greater length when so desired. However, it is recommended for the entire series of eight exercises to be finished within ten minutes.

Exercise #1: Upholding Heaven

This exercise releases toxic qi from the “Triple Burners” located in three areas of the thorax which govern temperature regulation within the body. This exercise energizes and improves circulation within all of the internal organs by stimulating the triple warmer meridian.

1. Stand erect with feet apart, toes forward, and arms at your sides.
2. Turn hands so that the palms are up and slowly raise your hands above the head.
3. As the hands meet above the head then interlock your fingers. In doing so, turn your palms downward.
4. Then rotate the hands so that the palms are upward and push upward with fingers still interlocked. As you do this, stretch upward on your toes and raise your heels slightly off of the ground. Maintain this up stretched posture for several seconds.
5. Then come back down onto your heels and bring your arms downward and back to the sides.
6. Repeat this exercise a total of three times.

Exercise #2: Stretching the Bow

This exercise expands the chest to increase lung and heart capacity and strengthen the shoulders. It also balances qi flow throughout the body. It is also known to prevent occurrence of one sided paralysis that could eventually happen in late in life.

1. Stand erect with arms at your sides and breathe slowly and rhythmically from your lower dantian located two inches below your umbilicus.
2. Step your left foot out to your left side so that feet are shoulder width apart.
3. Bend your knees and open your thighs to assume a horse stance - meaning a horse riding posture. Cross your arms in front of you at the wrists with your left arm in front of the right. Do so with hands in fists except for the left index finger, which is extended.
4. As if holding a bow in your left hand and the string of the bow string in the right hand, push out your left arm until it is straight. In doing so, slowly turn your head to the left. Simultaneously pull your right hand toward the right chest as though pulling the string. Be sure to concentrate your attention on the tip of your left index finger. As you turn, hold breath for six seconds and exhale slowly while you begin to change positions.
5. Relax the arms and re-cross them in front of you, this time with the right arm in front of the left and the right index finger extended.
6. Open the bow again, this time to the right side. Repeat sequence three times.

Exercise #3: Upholding Heaven and Earth

Performance of this exercise harmonizes the energetics of the spleen and stomach meridians which function to strengthen transformation and transportation of food to aid in digestive function. This exercise also promotes the body's elimination function by providing contractile force to the large and small intestine meridians which flow along the arms.

1. Stand erect with the arms at the sides and feet apart.
2. Raise your hands to the solar plexus with palms upward, fingertips touching slightly, and elbows straight to the sides.
3. Raise left hand above your head with fingers pointed inward, while rotating the left arm so that your palm faces above toward the heaven. Simultaneously, lower your right hand to your right side with palm facing down and fingers pointed inward. In doing so, be sure to stretch both arms.
4. Relax your arms and return to the starting position.
5. Repeat the exercise on the other side. Do on both sides and repeat this exercise three times each.

Exercise #4: Looking Backwards

This exercise strengthens energy within the five yin organs and their associated yang organs. The five yin organs include the heart, spleen, lungs, kidneys, and liver, whereas the five yang organs are the small intestine, stomach, large intestine, urinary bladder, and gall bladder.

1. Stand erect with the hands at your sides and feet shoulder width apart.
2. Cross the hands several inches in front of your face with right hand the closest to it.
3. Pull your hands to the sides and back with arms straight and palms forward. Turn your head to the left as far as it will go without rotating the waist. In doing so, your left shoulder will sink slightly lower than the right.
4. Cross the hands in front of you once again, but this time with the left hand closest to the face.
5. Repeat on both sides, three times each.

Exercise #5: Bending Sideways

This exercise was designed to release excess fire from the heart meridian. This is a condition caused due to excessive anger and frustration, although a moderate amount of fire in the heart is traditionally said to be natural and healthy.

1. Stand erect with feet shoulder width apart. Bend your knees and open your thighs to form a horse stance - meaning a horse riding posture. Place your hands just above the knees with thumbs facing inward.
2. Bend your body to the left side while allowing shoulders and head to tilt to the left.
3. Return to an upright position while still maintaining your horse stance.
4. Bend your body and head this time to the right side.
5. Return again to an upright position while still maintaining your horse stance.
6. Tilt your head forward and then backward
7. Relax your neck completely and rotate your head first counterclockwise and then clockwise.

Exercise #6: Punching with Angry Eyes

This exercise increases the strength and vitality of the physical body's structure and internal organs.

1. Stand erect with your hands at your sides and feet slightly apart.
2. Step to the left, bend your knees and open your thighs to form a horse stance - meaning a horse riding posture. Place your fists at your waist with palms upward.
3. Open your eyes very wide, as though you were angry. With the left fist, punch to the left and then return the fist to the left waist. Keep your eyes on your knuckles as you punch.
4. Continuing to keep your eyes wide, punch with the right fist to the left side and then return the fist to the right waist.
5. Repeat these two punches, but now on the opposite side.
6. Punch forward with your left fist and return it to the left waist. Then punch forward with your right fist and return it to the right waist.
7. Re-assume an erect posture, knees straight but feet still shoulder width apart.
8. Punch to the left side with the left fist and return to left waist.
9. Punch to the right side with the right fist and return to right waist.
10. Punch forward with the left fist and return to left waist.
11. Punch forward with the right fist and return to right waist.

Exercise #7: Standing on Toes

This exercise increases the ability of the body to withstand influences from nature and the cosmos which are out of harmony. They also strengthen the vital organs, especially those of the stomach and kidneys.

1. Stand erect with hands at your sides and feet slightly apart.
2. Raise your heels up slowly and hold this extended position for several seconds.
3. Return your heels slowly to the ground.
3. Repeat two more times.

Exercise #8: Bending Over and Stretching Back

This exercise was designed to increase the flexibility of the waist and legs. It also stimulates the energetics of the kidneys and increases vital energy to help prevent illness. These exercises also directly influence the energetic of the urinary bladder, gall bladder, and spleen by stimulating their meridians.

1. Stand erect with feet slightly apart and hands at your sides.
2. Bend your body forward while keeping knees straight.
3. Touch your palms to the floor when possible and then grab your toes. Hold your toes while in this bending forward position for several seconds.
4. Straighten your back and move upward slowly and place hands on the back of your hips.
5. Arch your head and back backwards.
6. Repeat these bending forward and backward movements a total of three times.