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## BA DUAN JIN

### **Eight Chinese breathing health exercise/ Eight section brocade health exercise**

In Chinese custom, fitness exercises are divided into eight types, with each geared to some specific part of the body.

Ba Duan Jin (literally translated as "eight section brocade") is the earliest recorded health related exercise in China. The Chinese maintain that through proper use of this regimen, the exercises will have a beneficial effect on the stomach, intestines, waist, kidneys, the respiratory organs and the nervous system. They are said to be capable of curing certain illnesses and strengthening one's constitution in general.

#### A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE EIGHT EXERCISES FOLLOWS:

1. Two hands pushing the sky: this regulates "the three Chiao" - all internal organs. Traditional Chinese medicine divides the body into three regions - the upper, the middle and the lower. These are called the three chiao. The upper chiao is the region above the thoracic diaphragm, including the heart, lungs and digestive tract. The middle chiao indicates the area between the diaphragm and the naval including the spleen and stomach. The lower chiao is the area below the naval, including the kidneys, bladder, large and small intestines. The stretching motion of this exercise movement helps increase the rate of metabolism and regulates every organ of the body.

Method: Place feet one shoulder width apart, bring hands (in fists) up in front of body. As you breathe in push hands up above head, palms open, stretch up on toes and hold breath. As you breathe out bring hands down in front of body in fists. Breathe in and push down, palms open and parallel to earth, stretch up on toes. Breath out and return hands in fists to sides. Repeat.

2. Bow and arrow shoots eagle: the stress of this exercise movement is laid on the thorax and waist to strengthen their muscles and those of the shoulders and arms to enhance respiration and blood circulation. Note the concentration of the eyes on the fingers and hands when the "bow is drawn" - this exercise also trains sight concentration and the extra ocular (eyeball) movement.

Method: Feet two shoulder widths apart. Knees slightly bent. Bring hands up in front - crossed, palms facing inward. Breathe in. Shift weight to right leg (weight distribution is 80/20). Draw back bow with right arm, expand chest, stretch left arm to side, thumb and forefinger at right angles, last three fingers bent, hand upright. Follow movement of left hand with eyes. Breathe out and come back to centre with hands crossed. Repeat movement to the left.

3. Holding up a single hand: - this regulates the spleen and stomach. Chinese medicine believes that the spleen is the organ producing blood, and the stomach is for digestion. The condition of the spleen and stomach has a direct effect on your health. As these organs are difficult to exercise, it is necessary to move the hands up and down in simultaneous vigorous opposite movements, in order to enhance gastrointestinal peristalses and to prevent their diseases and improve their digestive functions.

Method: feet one shoulder width apart. As you breathe in, right hand moves across body to left, turn slightly to left, bring hand up across body to above head. Follow the movement with your eyes. Push right hand up above head (look up) and left hand push down, palm parallel to earth. As you breathe out, bring right-hand-down slightly to left of body, turn to centre. Bring left hand up across body, turn slightly to right. As hands cross at centre, breath in and repeat exercise - left hand pushes up and right hand pushes down.

4. Repeated turning of the head:- this prevents or cures the "five injuries" or the "seven legions". The five injuries can be summarized as follows: injury to the

circulatory system, injury to the respiratory system, muscle injury, bone injury and tendon injury.

The seven legions refer to various lesions of the respiratory and circulatory systems and other internal organs which result from the daily life disturbances and maladjustment of the nervous system. THE HUANG DI NEIGHJING (2699 BC), the oldest Chinese medicine book. Indicates that "extreme excitement injures the heart, extreme anger injures the liver, extreme sorrow injures the lungs, extreme worry and meditation injures the spleen, extreme shock and terror injures the kidneys". This exercise therefore, alleviates mental fatigue and calms the central nervous system.

Method: Feet one shoulder width apart, hands behind back in fists, knuckles touching, thumbs touching. As you breathe in, turn head slowly to the left to past the shoulder. Train eyes to "glide smoothly", not to focus and jump from one object to the next. As you breathe out turn head slowly back to centre, and repeat to the right.

5. Rolling the head and oscillating the buttocks - this removes the "heart heat".

Traditional exponents of Chinese medicine contend that, physiologically there is a "boiling point" in every person, and that this shows itself in external symptoms, such as had mouth odours, "yellow fur" on the tongue, redness in the whites of the eyes, an angry disposition, and so on. These are caused by an internal physiological disharmony of the rate of metabolism which, in turn, leads to indigestion, tympanites and shortness of breath. Many believe that a balanced diet and a sufficient intake of liquids is the best solution to removing the "liver or heart heat". Others feel that this particular exercise will remove the "fever" and the "liver or heart heat" through the perspiring body. Still others think the heat is due to exercise tension of the sympathetic nerve. Whatever the cause, this exercise is designed to remove abnormal nervous tensions and regulate the excretory functions by fully relaxing the body.

Method: Feet two shoulder widths apart. Knees bent. Place hands at bottom of thighs, thumbs on outside of leg. As you breathe in, shift weight to left leg, push buttocks out

to the left, turn head to left and try and "see" buttocks over left shoulder. Breathe out and shift back to centre. Breathe in and repeat to right side.

6. "Vibrating the back seven times" - this removes diseases. Relax the body and "vibrate" in a non-strenuous way. The purpose of this exercise is to help both loosen and tighten the joints. Such an exercise is wholly commensurate with the concept of "opening and closing" as related to the practice of acupuncture. When done regularly and properly, it has the effect of arousing and refreshing the mind.

Method: Feet one shoulder width apart. Knees slightly bent. Arms out in front of you palms up. Slowly fold in fingers, from thumb to pinkie. Make a fist with thumb under fingers. Breathe in, pull fists back towards your waist, push past and to the back, fists facing up, squeeze shoulder blades together, keep arms straight. Stretch up on toes. Breathe out. Feet flat, knees slightly bent, bring fists to front, stretching arms forward. Breathe in. Repeat exercise. Open hands in front, one finger at a time, only when exercise is complete.

7. "Clenching the fists and staring ahead" - this increases overall strength. Prolonged training in this exercise can promote the development of the muscles and increase physical strength and endurance. Chinese martial arts exponents have traditionally regarded the development of physical energy, proper breathing and one's vital spirit as the basis of their training. This exercise is-a unique Chinese method which stresses the concentrated focusing of the eyes, which will result in the increase of both mental and physical strength.

Method: Feet two shoulder widths apart. Knees bent. Hands in fists at waist. As you breathe in, punch (slowly) left hand, turn forearm so fist faces downward. Open fingers slowly, from pinkie to thumb, stretch fingers and spiral hand completely round to left, make fist again, from pinkie to thumb. Pull fist back to waist, breathing out. Breathe in and repeat exercise with right hand.

8. Stretching, twisting and touching feet with both hands - this strengthens the kidneys and the waist. Chinese medicine believes that soreness and lack of strength around the waist indicates physical fatigue and that lack of energy is also partly caused by weak kidneys. Basically, this exercise is to extend and make more elastic the area around the waist, involving the movement of the abdomen and every tissue and organ in the abdomen. This exercise of the kidneys will promote regularity of the urinary system

Method: Clasp hands together, turn palms outward and stretch arms up above head, locking elbows. Breathe in, twist to left. Breathe out and come back to centre. Breathe in, twist to right. Breathe out, come back to centre. Bend sideways from waist to left, breathe in. Breathe out, come back up to centre. Bend sideways from waist to right, breathe in. Breathe out, come back up to centre. Breathe in, bend forwards from waist keeping back straight and arms above head, down to toes. Breathe out, relax, hands touching the floor. Breathe in, grab ankles and pull down. Breathe out, relax, hands touching the floor. Breathe in, bring hands up to just under the knees, push up and look up. Breathe out, relax and come up slowly. Repeat.