

Tai Chi Warm-Up & Stretching Exercises

Breathing position: tongue on roof of mouth, just behind gum ridge

Stance Position: feet shoulder width apart, pelvis tipped under, low back lengthened, weight towards the ball on the balls of feet

Open with the QiGong breathing exercise:

Standing in stance position, hands in front of chest, head width apart

On inhale "push" hands shoulder width apart, draw hands apart and bring shoulder blades together

On exhale "push" hands together head width apart, open shoulder blades

Do exercise at a comfortable breathing rate

Repeat 3X

1. Neck

Start with squeeze the ball with hands, one hand chest height, palm down, one hand belly button height, palm up. Feet shoulder width apart, knees relaxed

- a. **Nod** - head down, hands in front of body, palms down, raise to shoulder level (head follows hands) turn hands, push in to chin, stretch back of neck to make it longer, push out and down (head follow hands)
- b. **Neck turns** - slowly bring right palm up to eye level, move the palm to the right side turning head gently while looking at the palm. Repeat on the left, other hand at hip level, palm down

2. Shoulders

a. **Forward circles of shoulders:** roll shoulders gently forward 3 times

Backward circles of shoulders: rolls shoulders gently backward 3 times

- b. **Large circles:** hands palms out and up to side, bring together at head level, lower hands, palms down to waist level, breath when raising hands, exhale when pushing down

3. Spine

a. **Stretch:** hold ball, push top hand down, lower hand up as far as is comfortable, on a twisting motion turn upper hand so that palm is facing down, lower hand turns palm up. Squeeze the ball, pushing hands past one another, rotate upper hand, press down with bottom hand. You are moving down a central line

- b. **Turns:** hands in front as though you are carrying a large beach ball, knees slightly bent, turn waist gently to one side (following the upper arm), then rotate hands and turn to other side, then back to front (the ball rolls over)

4. Hip

a. **Forward/backward:** push hands back, bring leg to front, resting on heel, bring hands to front, leg to back resting on toe; do three then switch to other leg

- b. **Side stretch:** push hands to the side as though you are pushing a wall and stretch the opposite foot to the side, then feet together, switch sides

5. Knee

a. **Kick:** hands in fists at waist, palms up, bend one knee and kick out gently, at the same time let the opposite hand punch forward (palm down)
Step down and do the other side

- b. **Step forward:** bend knees, step forward with one foot, move forward and punch out with opposite fist
Step back and do the other side

6. Ankle

a. **Toe/heel tap:** heel on ground in front, then toe (hands on waist)

- b. **Rotation:** rotate the ball of the foot on the ground with heel slightly raised touching first outside of big toe, then the inside

Close: QiGong breathing exercise; repeat 3X

End: hands to side, clenching and unclenching fists, walking around and greeting others in class

Raise knees one after the other and hit thigh, side of hips and buttock gently with fist