

八段锦

Baduanjin

One of the best-known Qigong sets is the *Baduanjin* or “Eight Sections of Brocades”. Dating for the Song Dynasty and reputedly the creation of General Yue Fei who is also credited with the invention of the martial art Xingyiquan, although his role in these arts is likely to be nineteenth century fabrications.

The benefits of these exercises are:

- stretching muscles and tendons, aiding detoxification and recovery from aches and strains as well as fostering a good posture.
- Relaxed abdominal breathing, improving the oxygenation of body, which in turn improves cell metabolism and immune responses
- Strengthen muscles, bones and joints
- Opening and smoothing the fascia (the connective material between muscles) this is believed to enhance proprioception (body awareness) which will help with balance
- Aids to the circulation of lymphatic fluids aiding the immune systems
- Provides a mental focus to help clear the mind of stresses and worries

This should be suitability for the frail and less healthy, however when taking up any new exercise, if you are in any doubt please seek medical advice.

The Baduanjin consists of eight exercises each done eight times. There exists some variation in the format but the following is common way to do them.

1. Hold up the heavens - Stimulates the *Triple Burner* meridian and loosens the body for the remaining exercises.



Start in a *wuji* stance (standing straight with arms by your sides and feet shoulder width or slightly wider apart) Interlock your fingers in front of your *dantien* (*just below your navel*), then pull you hands up, turn then to face up then push up above your head then stretch then out in front of your shoulders, before releasing the interlocked fingers and letting your hands

drop by your sides. Breath in on pulling your and hands ups and out when let go after release the interlocked fingers. Repeat eight times.

2. Drawing the Bow - stimulates Lung and Large Intestine



Start with arms crossed in front of you. With one hand form a fist and with the other point your index finger and hold out your thumb. Separate the cross hands as if drawing a bow and arrow in front of you. Focus and follow the out-stretch index fingers nail, turning the hand as you draw the bow so the back of that hand is now facing you. Leave the clenched fist at your shoulder. Feel the stretch between the thumb, index finger and your wrist, keep some tension in the imaginary bow, so that the out-stretch arm still has a bend at the elbow. Bring the hands back to crossed hands starting positions and repeat on the opposite side. Breath in when starting the move then out as the imaginary bow get fully drawn. Repeat to the left and right, four times on each side.

For a more athletic experience stand a little wider and lower your weight into the *Horse Stance*, where you look like you are sat on an invisible pony. This will make you use your thigh muscles.

3. Separate Heaven and Earth - promotes the Liver, Gall Bladder, Spleen and stomach meridian.



Start in the *Taiji* stance (as if hugging tree with arms forming a circle in front of you at chest height and palms facing in) move one hand down and the other hand up. As the hand separate turned the so the lower hand pushes down and the upper hand pushing up. Keep the rounded shape in the arms. Straighten and stretch your back, before bringing both hands back to chest hight, turning the palms in again. Repeat the move with the hand went down now going up and visa versa. Do this four times on each side.

4. Wise Owl gazes backwards - alleviates the five strains and seven ailments, which is pretty much everything.



Start in the Taiji stance, Slowly turn the waist, as you do so turn hands out, turn the waist as far as it will go, then keep turning with your shoulders, then turn your head, keeping your feet and legs where they are, finally move your eyes to look as far as you can over your shoulders. Be gentle to yourself, feel the stretch only to your soft limits, this exercise is not advisable if you are pregnant. Slowly return to facing forwards, first with the eyes, then shoulders then waist, turning the hand back in to face the palms. Repeat the move to look over the opposite shoulder, do this four times to each side.

5. Sway the head - Removes excess heat.



Start in the *wuji* stance, slowly raise a hand from your side straight up and then over your head. Keeping your feet flat on the ground let the weight of that arm pull you over to stretch the side of your body. Pull your hand up again and slowly bring it back down your side letting the weight of arm straighten you up. Breath in as hand come up, breath out when over your

head, in again as you start to straighten up and finally out as the hand goes back down by your side. Repeat the move on the opposite side, do so four times on each side.

6. Carrying the moon - Reinforces the kidneys.



Start in the *wuji* stance, slowly bend forwards, first tuck the head in, then drop the shoulders forward, followed by your back then your waist, letting your arms hang straight down to between your feet or as far down as is safe and comfortable for you. Lift yourself back up by first pulling the tailbone down and the rising from the waist, let your arm rise up in front you as you straighten your back, your arms then you go above your head to hold up the sky before you release them and let drop down by your sides. Breath out as you drop down, breath in as you lift yourself back up, out again as the hands come down and in again with hand by your sides before starting the move again. Repeat this eight times.

7. Clench the fists and glare fiercely - Increase vitality.



Form fists with both hands and hold them at your hips, knuckles facing down. Push one fist slowly forward, rotate and squeeze the fist as you extend your arm keeping it at waist high, ending up with knuckles facing up and palm down, the other fist stays by your hip. Breath out through as you slowly punch. This can be done through clenched teeth with glaring eyes as you punch out. Slowly bring the fist in rotating back to your hip, breathing in and relaxing the fist as you do so. Repeat the move with the other fist. Do four times left and right.

8. Bouncing on the toes – smoothes the Qi loosens the body.



Finally bury your knuckles into your lower back, lift yourself up on your toes, keeping your back straight and then bounce up and down on to your heels eight times. The aim is to shake your internal organs about, feel any tension release.



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