Qigong for beginners

a simple routine to start at home

Qigong for beginners can be this simple: six slow standing moves, about 10 minutes, no equipment and no experience needed. The word is pronounced "chi gong." Each step gives the position, movement, breath and repeats.

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The person in these photos does not exist. The images were made with AI. Why?

Before you start. Move slowly and only as far as feels comfortable. Stop if you feel pain, dizziness or shortness of breath. If you have a medical condition, have had surgery, are pregnant or are unsure, ask your doctor first. This page does not replace medical advice or instruction from a qualified teacher.

Prefer to follow a video? Try QiGong Movements for Beginners from Hospital for Special Surgery.

What is a good qigong routine for beginners?

This one is an adaptation: we put it together from basic moves that teachers publish widely, and it has no traditional lineage. Pick a level floor with room to reach out to each side.



1 Stand and settle

Place your feet shoulder-width apart, with soft knees, relaxed shoulders and eyes forward. Let your breath keep its own pace. Stay here for 6 breaths.



2 Raise and lower the arms

Breathe in as both arms float forward and up to shoulder height. Breathe out as they sink and your knees soften a little. Do this 8 times.



3 Open and close

Hold your hands in front of your chest, palms facing. Breathe in as they drift apart to shoulder width, then breathe out as they return and stop just short of touching. Do this 6 times.



4 Shift your weight

Keep both feet on the floor and your knees soft. Slowly move your weight onto your right leg, then your left, breathing evenly. Do 8 shifts to each side, with a hand on a chair back or wall if you need it.

5 Hold up the sky

Breathe in as your arms sweep out and up, then lace your fingers and press your palms toward the ceiling. Breathe out, unlace your fingers and let your arms float down. Do this 6 times with your heels on the floor.



6 Close with your hands on your belly

Rest one palm over the other just below your navel, the spot Chinese tradition calls the dan tian. Take 10 slow, low breaths. Lower your hands and pause before you move on.

What are the three golden rules of qigong?

Health qigong writers describe three "regulations": body, breath and mind. For a beginner, that comes down to three habits:

- **Body:** Keep your posture upright and relaxed.
- **Breath:** Let the breath set the pace of the move.
- **Mind:** Keep your attention on what you are doing.

How often should a beginner practice?

NCCIH sets no general schedule. Teachers tend to favor short and regular: White Tiger Qigong says a little every day counts for more than a lot once in a while. A fixed slot helps, such as right after you brush your teeth.

Can you learn qigong on your own?

You can try simple moves like these at home. For the finer points, watch QiGong Movements for Beginners from Hospital for Special Surgery, or browse the qigong YouTube channels compared.

A teacher can correct your posture in a way a video can't. Instructors don't need a license in the US and no national certification standard exists, so NCCIH suggests asking about their training and experience. See how to find a qigong class.

Eight Brocades or 18 Movements: which should you learn next?

Go with the shorter form first. The Eight Brocades are described as simple and easy to learn, with only eight parts to remember. Two of them take your head low, and the page gives easier versions. The 18 Movements are slow, single moves with little foot movement, in a longer set. You can learn either one part at a time.

What are the negative side effects of qigong?

NCCIH describes qigong as appearing safe, and notes that many studies reported no negative side effects. Two studies in a neck pain review did report muscle pain, soreness and headache, in under 10 percent of people and at about the same rate as other exercise. It tells pregnant women to talk with a health care provider before starting, and warns against using qigong to put off seeing one about a medical problem. Read more in is qigong safe?

If standing tires you, use the seated routine instead. If your shoulders are sore, keep your hands more in front of you when you hold up the sky.

What next?

- **Follow along:** QiGong Movements for Beginners from Hospital for Special Surgery.
- **Next routine:** the Eight Brocades, eight movements in a set order.
- **What studies report:** qigong benefits.