

Silk-Reeling Exercises for All Parts of the Body

A. HEAD

1. *Turning the head*

Movements: Start with the *wuji* commencing posture, the feet shoulder-width apart. Keep the head upright, the shoulders level, and the body naturally relaxed. Look forward. Then gently rotate the head alternately to the left and right at a slow and uniform speed. Breathe naturally. (Figures 4.1, 4.2; see also Section A in Chapter V for a full description of the *wuji* posture)



FIGURE 4.1



FIGURE 4.2

Point for concentration: The upper *dantian*, at the *zuoqiao* point between the eyebrows. (Figure 4.3)

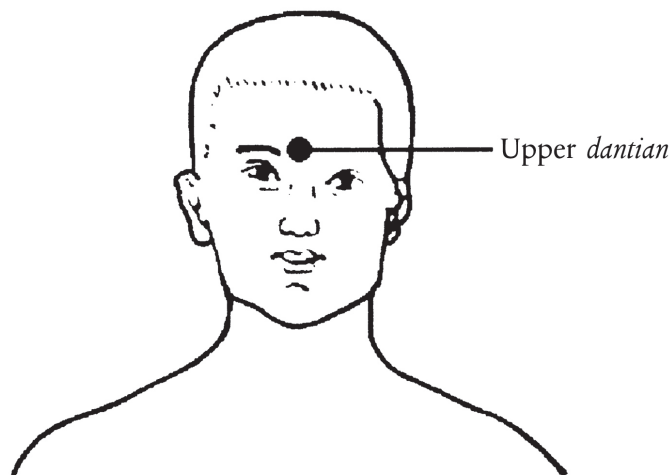


FIGURE 4.3 THE ZUQIAO

Efficacy: Refreshes the brain, comforts the spirit, and improves the blood circulation in the brain and the blood’s ability to provide oxygen.

Advice: Practitioners suffering from high blood pressure, dizziness, or headache are advised not to concentrate on the upper *dantian*. They should just do the rotating movements without concentration. If there is an uncomfortable feeling even when practicing the movements without concentration, the exercise should not be done at all.

The position of the head is the key to developing one’s Taiji push-hands techniques and to keeping the “gravity line” of the body centered and straight. Keeping the head in a correct position makes it possible to prevent one from bowing forward, leaning backward, or slanting to the sides. Also, it brings the balance control of the body into full play.

2. *Circling the neck*

Movements: Start with the *wuji* commencing posture, the feet shoulder-width apart. Roll the head clockwise around the neck. The movement should be slow and uniform and the upper body should follow the movement of the head. Breathe naturally. (Figures 4.4, 4.5) Do further repetitions and then change the direction to counterclockwise.



FIGURE 4.4



FIGURE 4.5

Point for concentration: The *dazhui*, located in the pit under the seventh cervical vertebra on the central line of the back. (Figure 4.6)

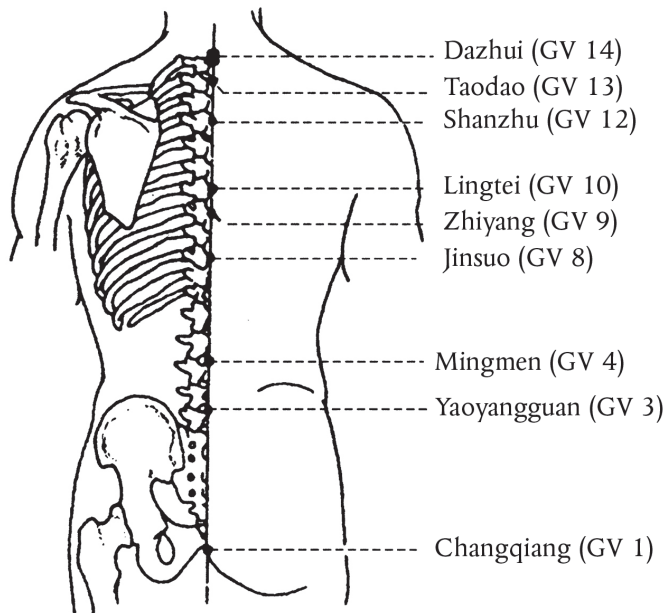


FIGURE 4.6 THE DAZHUI

Efficacy: Regular exercise promotes the relaxation of the neck, increases the range of motion of the neck, promotes the agility and flexibility of the neck in order to “rotate at a touch,” improves the ability of the neck to bear strikes, and improves the circulation of *qi* and blood in the neck. Furthermore, the exercise is particularly effective in easing neck ache, muscle rigidity, spur, stiff neck, and shortage of blood or oxygen supply to the neck, among others.

Advice: The upper body follows the rotation of the neck, but it should not tilt forward or lean backward too much.

B. UPPER LIMBS

1. *Circling the shoulders*

Movements: Start with the *wuji* commencing posture, the feet shoulder-width apart. Clench the hands into hollow fists and put them on the sides of the body. Slowly lower your weight by gradually bending the legs. At the same time, hollow the chest and drop the shoulders. (Figures 4.7, 4.8)



FIGURE 4.7

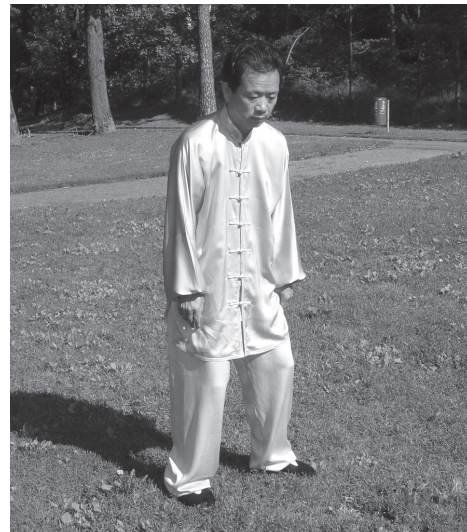


FIGURE 4.8

Rising up, push out the chest and make a circle with the shoulders by first moving them upward and then backward, downward, and forward. Bend the elbows following the circling movement. Breathe naturally. After doing further repetitions, reverse the direction. (Figure 4.9)

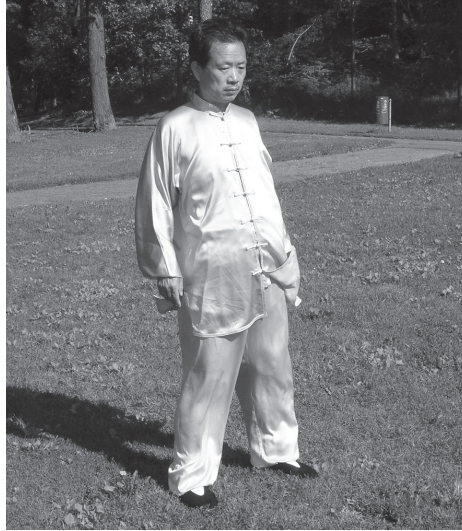


FIGURE 4.9

Point for concentration: The *jianjing*, at the midpoint between the *dazhui* and the acromion (the highest point of the shoulder). (Figure 4.10)

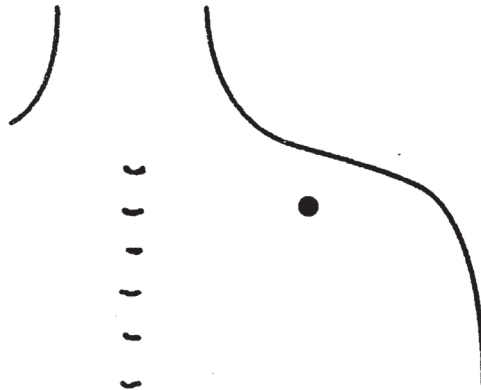


FIGURE 4.10 THE JIANJING

Efficacy: Regular practice of the silk-reeling exercise of the shoulders is good for relaxing the shoulders and increasing the shoulder rotation range of the motion. It improves the agility of the shoulder to “rotate at a touch” and change the direction of a force. It improves the effectiveness of the shoulder’s actions in neutralizing incoming energy (*jin*) or emitting energy and also the practitioner’s ability to bear strikes. Furthermore, it improves the *qi* and blood circulation of the shoulders and is effective in helping to treat omarthritis, omalgia, and motor impairment of the arm.

Moreover, the exercise can enlarge the capacity of the bones for bearing force, strengthen the tendons, improve the stability of the joints, and increase the range of movement of the shoulders. Also, the exercise promotes the secretion of bone fluid and lubricates and nurtures the joints and cartilages. Practicing the exercise can slow down osteoporosis and prevent the joints from being prematurely aged. It may ease muscle stiffness and make the muscles more flexible and elastic. The exercise may improve the ability of the local systems to circulate the lymph, blood, and *qi*, which is good for the metabolism and absorption of nutrients.

Advice: The silk-reeling exercises for each part of the body all have the above-mentioned effects. Silk-reeling exercises of the shoulders include single-shoulder and single-arm exercises in addition to the one described above.

2. Opening and closing silk-reeling of the elbows

Movements: Start with the *wuji* commencing posture. Move the feet a little bit wider than shoulder-width apart. Bend the knees and lower your weight. At the same time, hollow the chest and tuck the stomach in. Clench the fingers into fists and bring the hands together in front of the stomach. (Figures 4.11, 4.12)



FIGURE 4.11



FIGURE 4.12

Then part the arms by circling the elbows from the front upward, then backward and downward, completing a full circle. Raise and lower the center of gravity along with the movement of the elbows. Breathe naturally. Do further repetitions and then reverse the direction.

Point for concentration: The *quchi*, at the lateral end of the transverse cubital crease of a flexed elbow. (Figure 4.13)

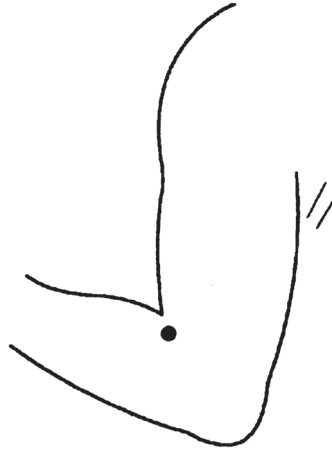


FIGURE 4.13 THE *QUCHI*

Efficacy: Regular practice of the silk-reeling exercise of the elbows is good for relaxing the elbows and increasing the elbow rotation range of the motion. It improves the agility of the elbow to “rotate at a touch” and change the direction of a force. It improves the effectiveness of the elbow’s actions in neutralizing incoming energy (*jin*) or emitting energy and also the practitioner’s ability to bear strikes. Furthermore, it improves the *qi* and blood circulation of the elbows and is effective in helping to treat elbow pain, arthritis, and motor impairment of the arm.

Advice: A Taijiquan proverb asserts that “the elbow never touches the costal area,” so a distance of one fist or so between the elbow and the ribs should be kept while practicing. In addition to this exercise, the silk-reeling exercises for the elbows include single-elbow exercises as well as fixed-direction exercises to the front, back, left, and right.

3. Circling the hands

Movements: Start with the *wuji* commencing posture, the feet shoulder-width apart. Raise both arms slowly to the front. Make a circle with both hands from the inside to outside around the wrists. Breathe naturally. Do further repetitions and then reverse the direction. (Figures 4.14, 4.15)



FIGURE 4.14



FIGURE 4.15

Point for concentration: The *laogong*, at the center of the palm, between the second and the third metacarpal bones, but closer to the third. Touched by the tip of the third finger when the fingers are clenched into a fist. (Figure 4.16)

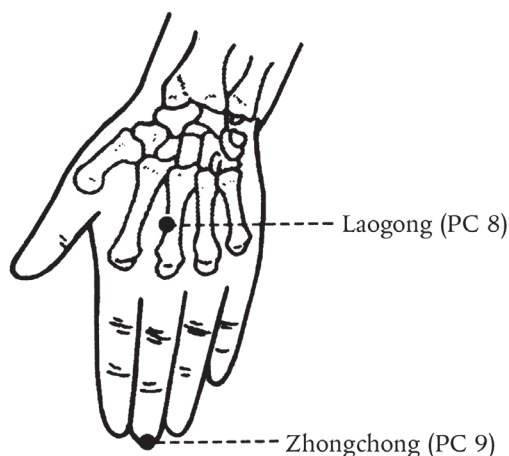


FIGURE 4.16 THE LAOGONG AND ZHONGCHONG

Efficacy: Regular practice of the silk-reeling exercise of the wrists is good for relaxing the wrists and increasing the wrist rotation range of the motion. It improves the agility of the wrist to “rotate at a touch” and change the direction of a force. It improves the effectiveness of the wrist’s actions in neutralizing incoming energy (*jin*) or emitting energy and also the practitioner’s ability to bear strikes, and promotes the seizing and joint-locking techniques. Furthermore, it improves the *qi* and blood circulation of the hands and wrists.

The *laogong* on the hand is an important acupoint in Qigong. The hand is the place where the three yang meridians of the hand and the three yin meridians of the hand originate and link. The concentration on the *laogong* combined with a spiral twining movement of the hand in this silk-reeling exercise can be effective in helping *qi* reach the tip section of the hand and make *qi* flow smoothly along the six meridians of the hand.

Advice: The silk-reeling exercises for the wrists include single-hand exercises in addition to this exercise.

4. *Spiral silk-reeling to the left and right with the arms*

Movements: Start with the *wuji* commencing posture. Take a large step to the left with the left foot, leaving the weight on the right foot. Inhale and make a clockwise circle on the front-left side of the body with the left hand. Let the hand lead the movement of the arm. Exhale and move the left hand downward, keeping it close to the left side of the chest, and then, with the palm facing upward, continue the movement along the left leg all the way down to the instep of the left foot. (Figures 4.17, 4.18)



FIGURE 4.17



FIGURE 4.18

After that, shift your weight to the left foot. Inhale and make a counterclockwise circle on the front-right side of the body with the right hand. Let the hand lead the movement of the arm. Exhale and move the right hand downward, keeping it close to the right side of the chest, and then, with the palm facing upward, continue the movement along the right leg all the way down to the instep of the right foot. Do further repetitions of the exercise. (Figures 4.19, 4.20)



FIGURE 4.19



FIGURE 4.20

Point for concentration: The *laogong*.

Efficacy: Improves the overall attack and defense capabilities of the arms through the actions of “when intent arrives, *qi* arrives; when *qi* arrives, movement arrives; the internal and external combine into one; and *qi* threads through three sections.”

Advice: The silk-reeling exercises for the arms also include single-arm exercises for the left and the right arm, double-armed smooth and reverse silk-reeling, smooth and reverse silk-reeling for the left and right single arm, double-armed diagonal opening and closing silk-reeling, and double-armed front/back and up/down spiral silk-reeling.