

Tai Chi Health Stick 太極養生杖

The Tai Chi Health Stick movements are synchronized with our breathing and guided by the stick. In practicing with the Tai Chi Stick, we should twist, turn, bend and stretch around the waist as the centre, moving our spine accordingly. The waist and hips are relaxed; the body is upright and comfortable, moving the waist in harmony with the stick.

When the stick is lifted up; sink the waist and lower 'qi' down to the 'dantian'. When the stick is lowered down; straighten the waist and pull 'qi' up to the 'baihui'. When rotating the stick in a circle, the waist becomes the anchor.

The stick is also used to help stretch muscles, strengthen bones and massage acupoints. The stick becomes an extension of our arms, guiding our body movements with the waist as the centre.



Initial Stance (预备势)

1. When standing, the legs are naturally straight, body upright, lift the crown (baihui) with chin slightly drawn in, shoulders lowered, waist and hips relaxed, the mind is calm and focused.
2. When lifted the stick up, breathe in as you curl the wrist and flex the elbow; when lowering the stick, breathe out as you extend the wrist and arms.



Movement 1: Boatman rows with oar (艄公摇橹)

1. When stepping forward, choose the appropriate stride according to your own ability.
2. When circling the stick between the shoulder and waist, coordinate the movements with the upper and lower limbs, keeping it natural and smooth. Keep the elbows naturally bent, pay attention to lifting the crown (baihui) and breathe deeply.



Movement 2: Boat moves slowly (轻舟缓行)

1. When circling the stick, rotate the waist naturally to match the movement, eyes follow the stick. Breathe in as the movement starts and breathe out when the movement completes.
2. When holding the stick, imagine the force is transmitted downwards with the stick, and the qi sinks into the dantian.
3. Beginners can start with a wider stance, but as you improve, the insoles of the feet should be inline.
4. This exercise should be done slowly and with caution for those with shoulder problems.



Movement 3: Wind blows lotus leaf (风摆荷叶)

1. The different grips require different wrist movements.
2. When drawing circles in both directions, relax the shoulders and extend the arms when the waist turns.
3. When bending the body and drawing circles, the hand at the lower end of the stick guides the motion and should not be higher than the waist, the other hand remains high near the ear.
4. Apply force to the movement as per your own ability.
5. The width of the stance can be adjusted according to each individual's physique and ability.



Movement 4: Boatman tows with back (船夫背纤)

1. When tilting upwards to the side, slide the hand on the same side close to the end of the stick. When standing up and pressing the stick on the shoulders, slide the other hand to the other end of the stick, both hands should be symmetrically placed on the stick.
2. When holding the stick and drawing curves behind, the wrist should rotate and extend as well.
3. When turning the waist and rotating the stick, slide the stick on the shoulders while turning, with the stick rotating almost 180 degrees.
4. Start with a higher and shorter stance, with less rotation. Gradually increase the length of the stance, go lower, fully rotate and stretch until the upper body and legs are in line.
5. Massage the shoulders gently with the stick. When turning the waist to the right, press the 'jianjing' acupoint on the left shoulder and vice versa.



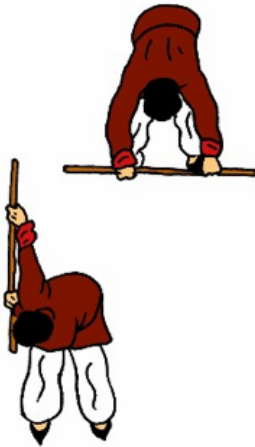
Movement 5: Magic needle calms sea (神针定海)

1. Use light and deep abdominal breathing with the movements.
2. When lifting the arm and extending the hand, relax the shoulders, bend the elbow, imagine breathing in the essence of nature deep into the 'dantian', and stand quietly for a moment.



Movement 6: Golden dragon wags tail (金龙绞尾)

1. The balance of yin and yang should be manifested in every movement. When pushing the stick forward, extend the legs backwards; when drawing a vertical circle from bottom up, move your weight downwards.
2. When twisting the stick, rotate wrists outward and inhale; when pressing the stick, rotate wrists inward and exhale; when rising, inhale; when sinking, exhale.
3. If unable to squat low, choose a higher squat and press one knee against the 'chengshan' acupoint of the other leg.
4. When drawing a vertical circle, relax the shoulders and stretch the arms; when sliding hands to the ends of the stick, hold the stick tight, lowering the shoulders and elbows.



Movement 7: Explore sea for treasure (探海寻宝)

1. When raising the stick in from, lower the shoulders and raise the elbows; when bringing stick back to chest, flex hands, wrists and elbows in succession.
2. When twisting your body to the side, lead with the hand on the same side.
3. Breathing should be even, and coordinated with the movement, mainly abdominal breathing.
4. When bending over, keep the knees straight and breathe smoothly. Do not bend too low if it restricts breathing and constricts the chest.



Movement 8: Qi returns to dantian (气归丹田)

1. The two palms are gathered together facing the 'dantian' with the hands approximately 10 cm apart.
2. When the hands return to the sides, they hang relaxed down.



Ending Stance (收势)

1. When standing up, relax waist, tighten hips, raise elbows and lower the shoulders. Stand straight and relaxed, imagine being one with nature.
2. Use light but deep abdominal breathing, it should be natural and may differ for different individuals.