

WHAT YOU NEED NOW

more stamina

so you can enjoy the holidays, rather than ending up drained and depleted by January 1.

TO THE RESCUE

qigong

(pronounced *chee-gong*, which means "energy work") This form of active meditation—made up of flowing repetitive movements designed to harness your body's energy—has been shown to enhance nervous system activity and lower stress hormone levels so you sleep better, feel more focused, and have fewer cravings. A recent UCLA study found that healthy adults reported feeling 10% more energetic throughout the day after practicing tai chi, a more complex form of qigong. A Swedish study also showed that qigong helped women in their 40s with fast-paced computer-based jobs to naturally slow their heart rate and blood pressure all day long. You can get all of these benefits and more (see p. 155) without stressing about how to fit it in! Enter: our exclusive 15-minute routine you can do anytime, anywhere (without changing into workout clothes!). Even if you can do only a few moves a day, you'll feel happier, revitalized, and ready for your best year yet.

THE EXPERT

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WORKOUT AT A GLANCE

For all-day energy, do the routine at least 3 times a week; for an instant lift, do your favorite move anytime. Go from one exercise to the next in the order they appear, flowing through all the repetitions slowly and gracefully without stopping. Breathe through your nose, lips closed and the tip of your tongue lightly touching the top of your mouth behind your teeth (an acupressure point thought to regulate energy).



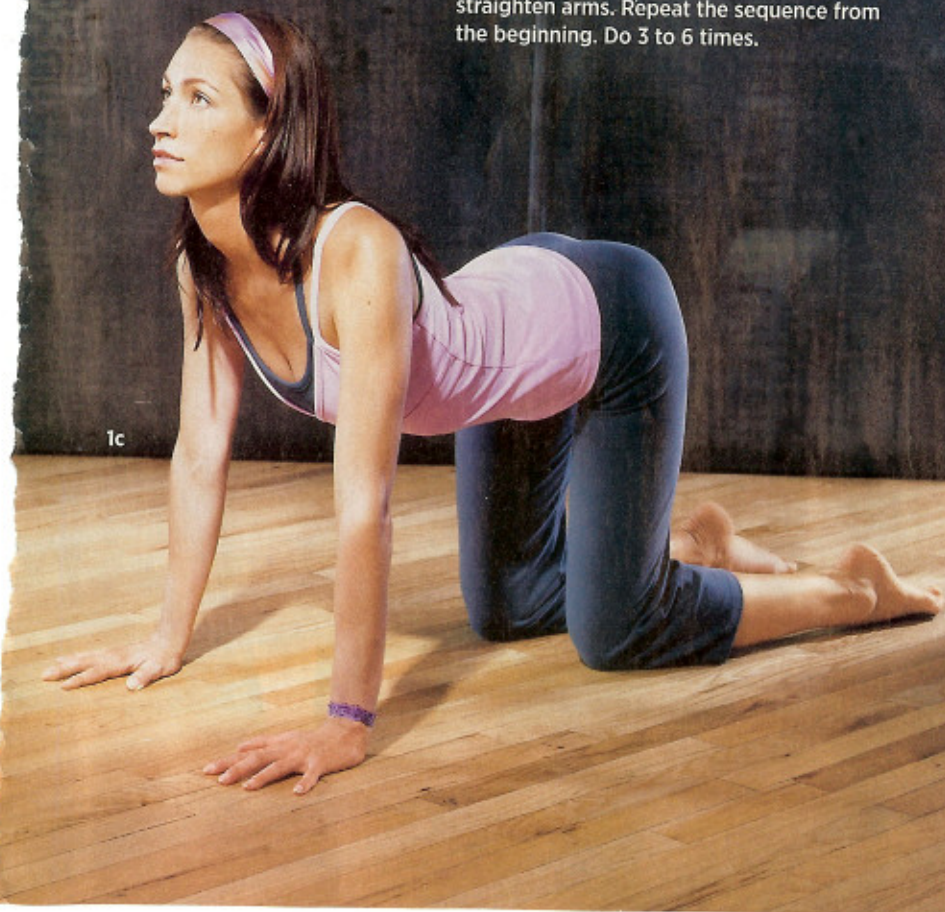
1a



1b

1 Big Cat Stretch

Begin on all fours, hands directly under shoulders and knees below hips, toes pointed back. Inhale, and pull belly up, rounding back toward ceiling and tucking head in to look at navel (1a). Exhale and sit back, reaching hips toward heels, arms extended forward (1b). Inhale, returning to all fours, then exhale and look upward, lifting chest and dropping belly toward floor (1c). For extra toning, add a yoga push-up at this point by bending elbows into sides and, on an inhale, lowering chest toward floor, keeping back curved. Exhale as you straighten arms. Repeat the sequence from the beginning. Do 3 to 6 times.



1c

HAIR AND MAKEUP BY MIKI WANG

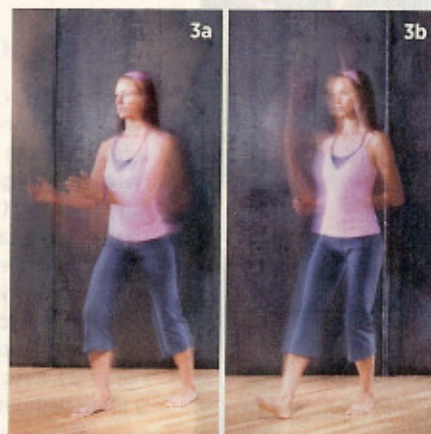
2 Holding Energy

Come to a standing position, feet hip-width apart, knees soft, hands in front of you with elbows softly bent and pointing out to sides, palms facing up. Inhaling, slowly lift hands to chin height, then turn palms down and, exhaling, lower to hip level. Turn palms up and repeat, lifting and lowering 3 times. Turn palms to face each other, and imagine you're holding a ball. Relax eyes and focus on the space where the ball would be as you move hands slightly closer and farther apart. Notice if you feel warmth or tingling between your hands—that's your body's energy at work. Hold for about a minute.



3 Rocking

Step right foot forward about 12 inches, arms at sides, elbows bent to 90 degrees, palms facing each other. Rock forward, bending right knee (like a lunge) (3a) as you inhale and extend arms upward, circling hands up and away from you. Exhale and rock back as hands circle down, bending left knee and straightening right, front foot flexed so toes are off floor. Bring hands up in front of body (3b). Continue rocking forward and back 6 to 9 times as you circle arms. Switch legs and repeat.



QIGONG: YOUR STRESS Rx

Taking care of ourselves right now is often last on our busy to-do list. Here, five reasons qigong is just what you need to stay healthy and happy this minute and all year long.

■ **It brightens your mood** For adults who experience a case of the blues over the holidays, doing qigong may ease depression as effectively as drugs—without the side effects—suggests a study from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Participants reported a 70% drop in symptoms after 2 months of practice, which seems to regulate serotonin levels.

■ **It deepens your sleep** Practicing tai chi helped people with sleep complaints drift off about 18 minutes faster and slumber 48 minutes longer in an Oregon Research Institute study. The meditative movements may modify circadian rhythms, so you sleep through the night.

■ **It revs immunity** Adults who did qigong and tai chi for 3 hours a week after receiving a flu vaccine produced three times as many antibodies as those receiving only the vaccine, reveals a study

from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This added protection could be helpful if your immune system is suppressed due to stress and lack of sleep.

■ **It eases headaches** Qigong may also be a drug-free sigh of relief from stress-related headaches, according to UCLA researchers. Women affected by these headaches who did tai chi reported less frequent and less severe pain. The exercise limited muscle spasms and inflammation that can contribute to headaches.

■ **It prevents slips and falls** By improving balance and reaction time, qigong can help you navigate slippery sidewalks. The slow, coordinated exercises enhance awareness of your body movement, improve control over the muscles that support the knees, and may even help you avoid a turned ankle, finds another University of Illinois study.



4 Twist and Reach

Step feet wide, arms wide and round (like you're holding a beach ball, right hand on top, left hand below). Shift weight to left, bending left knee slightly as you twist torso to right, raising left hand, palm up across body toward ceiling and lowering right, palm down, toward floor behind you, arms in a diagonal line (4a). Glide hands back to start position, opposite hand on top (4b). Then shift right and twist to left, switching arms. Alternate sides for 6 to 9 reps on each.

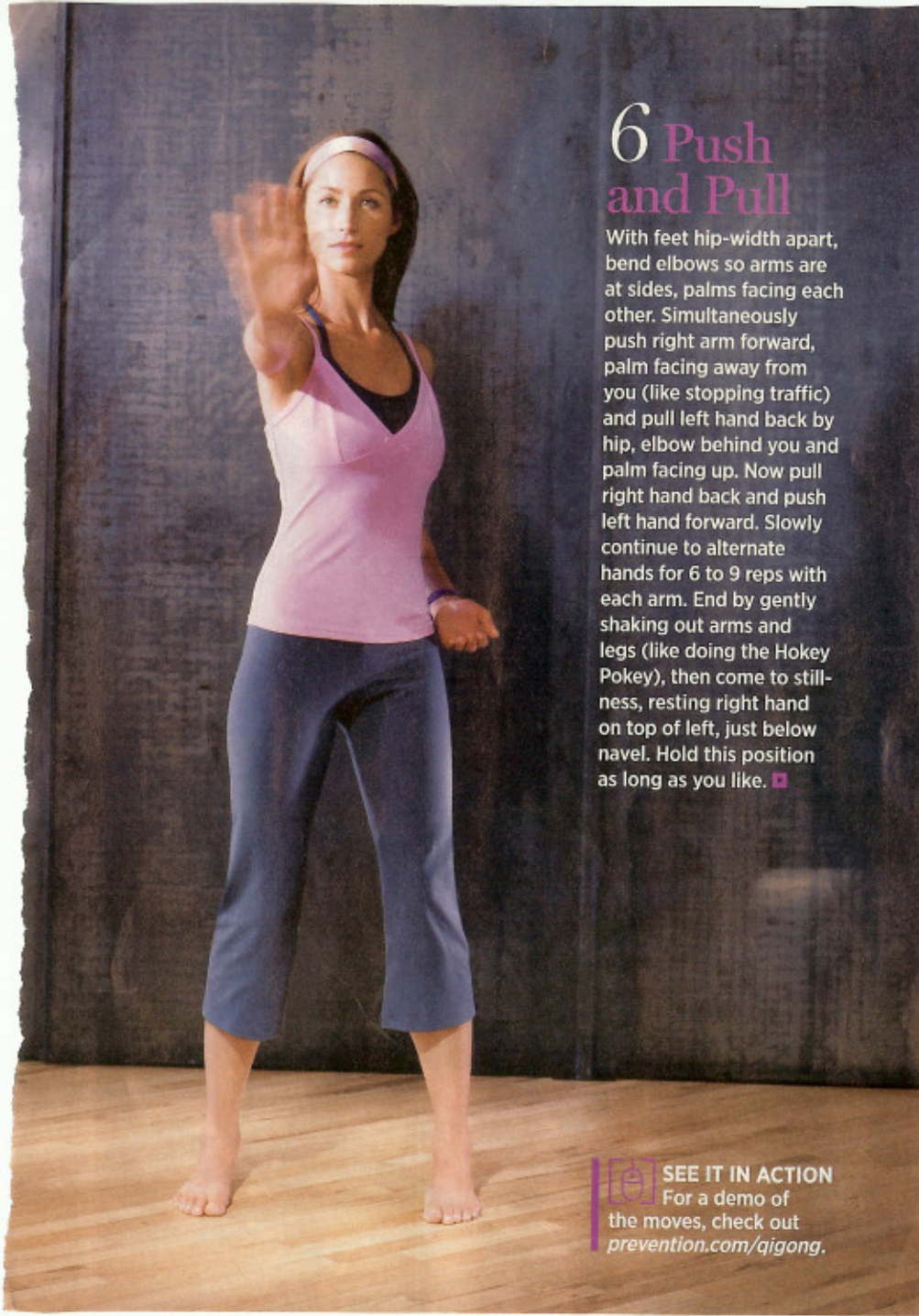
5 Scooping the Earth

Beginning with feet wide apart and toes turned out, rest back of left hand on lower back and extend right arm to side, parallel to floor, palm facing downward. Bend right knee into a lunge (5a) and hinge forward from hips, reaching right hand toward floor. Slowly shift weight to center (both legs equally bent in a plié squat), then to left side (lunging with left leg), scooping right arm across floor (5b). Inhaling, with left knee still bent, lift upper body, right arm stretched across body to left side, then slowly pull hand across front of body, exhaling and lunging to right (5c). Eyes focus on right hand throughout. Do 6 to 9 times without stopping. Switch sides and repeat.



6 Push and Pull

With feet hip-width apart, bend elbows so arms are at sides, palms facing each other. Simultaneously push right arm forward, palm facing away from you (like stopping traffic) and pull left hand back by hip, elbow behind you and palm facing up. Now pull right hand back and push left hand forward. Slowly continue to alternate hands for 6 to 9 reps with each arm. End by gently shaking out arms and legs (like doing the Hokey Pokey), then come to stillness, resting right hand on top of left, just below navel. Hold this position as long as you like. ■



 SEE IT IN ACTION
For a demo of the moves, check out prevention.com/qigong.