

# Qigong

Qigong is a Chinese practice that combines gentle movements, breathing techniques and meditation to improve the flow of Qi energy through the body. Qigong is offered by trained instructors to help with physical, psychological and spiritual health.

Specific to people with cancer, recent research suggests that Qigong may be beneficial for quality of life, fatigue and biological outcomes, such as inflammation and immune responses.

Whilst more high quality research is needed, Qigong is considered a safe and gentle activity that may be beneficial for people with cancer.



**Helping you live well.**

## Information on Qigong

This evidence based information sheet aims to provide clearly sourced and reliable information to help you make informed choices about Qigong, one of a range of complementary therapies available to support people with cancer. If you would like more information on how to access the range of services Penny Brohn Cancer Care provides, please contact our Helpline on 0845 123 23 10. We are able to provide our services free of charge, thanks to the charitable donations and voluntary contributions which fund our work.

### Penny Brohn Cancer Care opinion

We support this therapy and include it as part of the Penny Brohn Whole Person Approach	We support this therapy, but do not offer it as part of the Penny Brohn Whole Person Approach	We do not support this therapy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Practitioner perspective

“Qigong is an ancient Chinese practice that supports the body’s internal energy through a range of seated, standing and moving exercises and meditations. As the internal strength and energy increases, people notice many benefits, often starting with improvements in health.

Qigong practice promotes awareness and increases perception, giving us more control over many aspects of life. At this level, Qigong can be used to support artistic and spiritual development, as well as being used for developing physical strength and health.



#### More information: What is Qigong?

Qigong (pronounced chee gung) is an ancient practice from Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Qigong practice combines gentle movements, meditation and breathing techniques to achieve optimal health and wellbeing. There is also a form of Qigong called ‘external Qigong’, which is performed by a trained therapist to emit ‘Qi’ energy to the patient and promote healing of various ailments and diseases.

The concept of ‘Qi’ energy is fundamental to Qigong philosophy. In traditional Chinese culture, Qi is regarded as the life force energy that flows through all living things. Disease states occur when the flow of Qi becomes blocked or unbalanced. Qigong is thought to improve the balance of Qi in the body and is practised by millions of people worldwide to treat a variety of physical illnesses and to promote psychological and spiritual wellbeing.

Although the idea of Qi energy is a popular belief, it has not been measured or explained scientifically. It is not necessary to believe in the concept of Qi in order to practise Qigong.

## What happens in a Qigong session?

- Qigong sessions usually last between 20 minutes and an hour. Teachers may vary greatly in terms of training and experience and it is important to find a teacher who is safe to teach those with cancer.
- Sessions involve fluid, rhythmic movements of the body, similar to those practised in Tai Chi. Poses may also be held for short periods of time.
- The teacher will ask participants to focus on their breathing and may encourage visualisation, for example visualising the flow of Qi around the body.

## What are the providers' claims?

(Please note that these are not the claims of Penny Brohn Cancer Care)

Traditional Chinese Medicine claims that Qigong cultivates the flow of Qi energy through the body. Practitioners suggest that Qigong 'harmonizes the organs, fills the body with life force energy and calms the spirit'. Practitioners recommend Qigong for a number of conditions including tinnitus, stress, hypertension, anxiety and burnout. However, it is most commonly promoted to help with the side effects of cancer and its treatments.

### What do people who have tried Qigong say about it?

Research studies known as qualitative studies ask people about their experiences.

They can tell us what having a therapy was like for the people involved in the study, but can't tell us if a therapy is likely to work for everyone (this is dealt with in the section "What is the evidence?").

We did not find any studies that asked people about their experiences of Qigong.



## Is Qigong safe?

There are no reports within the literature of adverse effects associated with Qigong. It is essential that medical circumstances are discussed with the teacher before attending a class.

### How much does it cost?

Qigong can be practised in the home or in group classes, which are normally inexpensive. Single sessions cost from around £5-£10 and short courses are around £60.

### Are there any legal issues?

In the UK it is illegal for a practitioner to claim Qigong can cure cancer. However, the professional practice of Qigong is not regulated by law and there are no reputable organisations in the UK that train and certify Qigong practitioners/therapists.

### What is the evidence on Qigong?

Research suggests that Qigong may be beneficial for quality of life, fatigue, immune function and inflammation. However, almost all studies of Qigong in cancer care have methodological weaknesses and are at risk of bias. More high quality research is needed. This is a summary of research findings. A full list of references and an extended summary of the research literature is available upon request from our Helpline.

### Other sources of information

Organisations that offer support and information for people with cancer	More information on complementary therapies	Organisations that represent Qigong
Cancer Research UK Tel: 0808 800 4040 <a href="http://www.cancerresearchuk.org">www.cancerresearchuk.org</a>	NHS Evidence <a href="http://www.evidence.nhs.uk">www.evidence.nhs.uk</a>	British Health Qigong Association <a href="http://www.healthqigong.org.uk">www.healthqigong.org.uk</a>
Macmillan Cancer Support Tel: 0808 808 0000 <a href="http://www.macmillan.org.uk">www.macmillan.org.uk</a>	CAMLIS <a href="http://www.cam.nhs.uk">www.cam.nhs.uk</a>	Health Qigong Federation UK <a href="http://www.healthqigong.net">www.healthqigong.net</a>
NHS Direct Tel: 111 <a href="http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk">www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk</a>		

### Contact us:

Helpline **0845 123 23 10** (Weekdays 9.30am to 5.00pm, 24-hour answerphone)

Email: [helpline@pennybrohn.org](mailto:helpline@pennybrohn.org)

Address: Penny Brohn Cancer Care, Chapel Pill Lane, Pill, Bristol, BS20 0HH

### Statement

Our information and research is designed to help you make informed choices about the services that we provide. From time to time, for illustrative purposes, we may make reference to commonly available products (such as relaxation CDs and popular self-help books). We do not endorse or advertise the use of any specific product.

### Disclaimer:

While we make every effort to use up-to-date and reliable sources, we cannot accept liability for errors in the sources that we use and also cannot guarantee to find all the information relevant to your enquiry or request. All responsibility for interpretation of and action upon that information rests with you. This information and advice is offered on the understanding that if you intend to support your treatment with complementary or alternative approaches then it is advisable to consult your medical team to ensure that they have a complete understanding of your situation and the complementary or alternative approach that you are considering.

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