

## Ancient System of Qigong May Help With Healing Now

By Erinn Hutkin

As a qigong master, Wendy Goldman likens people's knowledge of the ancient Chinese system of exercise and meditation to yoga 30 years ago, when only a handful of folks knew about its many benefits. While yoga studios have since popped up across the country, San Diego based Goldman said qigong (pronounced cheegong) also offers plenty of health boosters.

In fact, she said, qigong is an umbrella word - similar to yoga or meditation - that encompasses thousands of techniques such as gentle movement, meditation and breathing, exercise, diet and lifestyle. Essentially, she said, it's a whole system of health.

And like yoga, said Fay McGrew, a certified qigong instructor who teaches at hospitals across San Diego - as well as at the University of California San Diego - it involves a mind-body connection.

"It's the mind-body branch of traditional Chinese medicine," she said. "Patterns are following the cycles of nature."

Those who teach the techniques say qigong has plenty of benefits when it comes to health. In addition to the belief that it improves flexibility and balance, McGrew said the

National Institutes of Health has done studies indicating that qigong is good for "anything related to heart health" and regulating high blood pressure.

She said many of her students have been able to reduce the number of blood pressure medications they take or wean off them completely. She said qigong can also help with recovery from heart surgery or heart disease.

McGrew added that in today's overstressed culture, people tend to adopt more shallow methods of breathing. Qigong's focus on breath and breathing exercises allows more oxygen into the body, which she said promotes detoxification and a boosted immune system. This helps with natural health and leads to a better metabolic rate.

Goldman said those who are diligent about qigong see the benefits of a boosted immune system in their everyday lives.

"Students who've been practicing a long time rarely get colds anymore," she said. "It's because everything in your system is so strong."

Also, Goldman said the mindfulness and mediation aspects of

qigong can result in stress reduction. That reduced stress level and calmer state of mind can help those with diseases such as cancer by easing side effects and fatigue.

In addition, she said, qigong can be helpful when it comes to managing pain. She likens pain in the body to a boulder being dropped in a stream- even though its path is blocked and there's a problem, water still flows around it, which she said is how she sees pain. She said qigong can help balance the body's energy, open that blockage and "put the system back in balance" to reduce pain.

As a long-time teacher, McGrew said she's used qigong to reduce stress in cancer patients and to increase the moods of those with Alzheimer's disease and dementia and help PTSD-affected soldiers at Camp Pendleton to learn how to relax the mind and body and sleep better.

But just as with anything else, Goldman said, the key to getting results is by practicing qigong diligently.

"It's a natural way to encourage a lot of self-healing," she said.



goldman  
WELLNESS  
CENTER