

Abdomen-rubbing qigong exercise and health preservation concept of Fang Kai, a Xin'an medical physician

新安医家方开的摩腹运气功法与养生思想

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Abstract

The abdomen-rubbing qigong exercise was first developed by Fang Kai, a Xin'an medical practitioner. It's an essential part of Xin'an health preservation works. This health preservation method integrates massage with Daoyin and integrates meridian theory with Zangxiang theory. It's safe, simple and has no side effects. Practice of this qigong exercise can protect the spleen and stomach, tonify qi and essence, harmonize Ying-Nutrients and Wei-Defense, unblock meridians and circulate qi. This paper aims to summarize and promote this exercise.

Keywords: Qigong; Qigong Massage; Physical and Breathing Exercises; Health Promotion

【摘要】摩腹运气功法为清代新安医家方开首创,是新安医学养生著作中的重要组成部分。它是一种按摩与导引相结合,经络理论与藏象理论相结合的特色鲜明的养生保健疗法。摩腹运气功法操作简单,安全无副作用,具有顾护脾胃,补气益精,调和营卫、疏通经络、宣畅气机等养生保健作用,为推广与普及摩腹运气功法,对其进行总结。

【关键词】气功;气功按摩;导引;养生

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As an ancient wisdom, the nature of health preservation is harmony between man and nature and between body and mind. Based on classic Chinese medical theory, health preservation exercise aims to benefit the Zang-fu organs, qi, blood and meridians and achieve wellness and longevity.

1 The Origin of Abdomen-rubbing Qigong Exercise

Xin'an medicine was a regional and comprehensive TCM sect and it began at a core area of ancient Huizhou (Xin'an) area, where there were six counties^[1]. Its distinctive health care thoughts endured until now. Fang Kai, a doctor of Xin'an medical science, living in She County in Anhui province, was good at guiding technique. He wrote *Mo Fu Yun Qi Tu Kao* (Research on Pictures for Abdomen Qigong Massage), which was also called *Yan Nian Jiu Zhuan Fa* (Nine Laws for Prolonging Life). His ways of guiding technique passed by generations, and it is now included in *Yi Shen Ji* (Collected Works for Taking Care of Body).

Since the ancient China, there were abdominal massage records, such as Chao Yuan-fang's *Zhu Bing Yuan Hou Lun* (Treatise on the Pathogenesis and Manifestations of All Diseases), which recorded the therapy for abdominal pain with bowel movements due to deficiency^[2]. Sun Si-miao also emphasized the great significance of abdominal massage to health care after meals in *Bei Ji Qian Jin Yao Fang* (Essential Prescriptions Worth a Thousand Gold for Emergencies)^[3]. Even Lu You, the famous poet in Song Dynasty, also preferred this way and wrote 'unsnapping and massaging abdomen under the window, never mind being made fun because of the inelegance'.

However, *Yan Nian Jiu Zhuan Fa* (Nine Laws for Prolonging Life) written by doctor Fang Kai in Qing Dynasty was the first monograph of abdominal qigong health-care^[4]. It recorded that Fang Kai practiced abdominal qigong exercise during his whole life, so he was able to live for nearly a hundred years. People called him 'living immortal' at that time. He thought that although the abdomen-rubbing qigong exercise was simple, it was in accordance with the law of yin and yang, could regulate the upside and the downside, had an effect to get rid of disease, and helped people to live a long life^[5].

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2 Instructions of Abdomen-rubbing Qigong Exercise

The abdomen-rubbing qigong exercise has a total of nine sections.

Section 1: An-press the precordium (xiphoides) with three middle fingers and Mo-rub clockwise from left for a total of 21 times (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Section 1

Section 2: Mo-rub clockwise at the same time go down from precordium to the high bone below the navel (pubis) with the three fingers in the middle of two hands, with a total of 21 times (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Section 2

Section 3: Mo-rub and at the same time go up from the high bone (pubis) to the precordium with the three fingers in the middle of two hands until they get together, for a total of 21 times (Figure 3).

Section 4: Directly Tui-push from the precordium down to the high bone (pubis) with the three fingers in the middle of two hands, for a total of 21 times (Figure 4).

Section 5: Mo-rub around the navel clockwise beginning from the left side with the right hand, for a total of 21 times (Figure 5).

Section 6: Mo-rub around the navel anticlockwise beginning from the right side with the left hand, for a total of 21 times (Figure 6).



Figure 3. Section 3



Figure 4. Section 4



Figure 5. Section 5



Figure 6. Section 6

Section 7: Hold the left rib (kidney area) with the left hand with the thumb forward and the other four fingers backward; Tui-push directly from the left breast to the thigh root (groin) with the three fingers in the middle of the right hand, for a total of 21 times (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Section 7

Section 8: Hold the right rib (kidney area) with right hand, with the thumb forward and the other four fingers backward; Tui-push directly from the right breast to the right thigh root (groin) with the three fingers in the middle of the left hand, for a total of 21 times (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Section 8

Section 9: Take a sitting position, with the thumbs pressing the little fingers, and the four fingers press on knees. Two toes are slightly curved, turn the upper body from left to front, then back from the right side, repeating 21 times. Afterwards, change the direction from right to front, and back from the left side, repeating 21 times (Figure 9).

When operating, we need to pay attention to deep breath and spirit holding, namely we need peaceful contemplation, and an empty mind. Practitioners ought to choose an environment with clean and fresh air, and should breathe with nose, inhaling qi into the Dantian (hypogastric).

Operation attention: The fingers must move slowly. Finishing the former 8 sections is one degree. Every

time when exercising, we should do 7 degrees in a row. After finishing, do the section 9. The morning class begins after getting up, the noon class is at the noon, and the night class is before sleep at night. The beginner practice 3 sessions one time, and 5 sessions a time after 3 d, and then 7 sessions after another 3 d.



Figure 9. Section 9

3 TCM Theory and Modern Research of the Abdomen-rubbing Qigong Exercise

Huang Di Nei Jing-Su Wen (Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine: Essential Questions) says that 'the back is yang, and the abdomen is yin'^[6]. The abdomen is for the residence of internal organs, including the liver, gallbladder, spleen, stomach, large intestine, small intestine, kidney, bladder, and other organs and some meridians. So the abdomen is called the house of viscera, and the origin of yin, yang, qi and blood. Doctor Fang Kai wrote in his book that 'abdominal massage method is both dynamic and static. It is corresponding to yin and yang, in accordance with the five Zang organs. It launches the vitality, and steers the change. So it can connect the upper and lower, regulate yin and yang, get rid of the old and grow the new, reinforce the five Zang organs, expel external pathogens, eliminate the internal diseases, tonify the deficiency, and purge the excess'^[5].

Based on the view of theory of yin and yang, the abdomen-rubbing qigong exercise actually can lead the qi to approach the balance between yin and yang. And this thought also corresponds to the theory of yin and yang.

Based on the view of visceral theory, spleen and stomach, as the acquired foundation, receive water and grains, and maintain normal physiological function. The spleen and the stomach are the hub of the ascending and descending activities of qi, so the massage on the abdomen can ascend clear qi and descend turbid qi. Lung governs expiration and kidney governs the inspiration. The abdomen-rubbing qigong exercise can balance the ascending and descending activities of qi and treat the diseases caused by disorder of qi activities.

Based on the view of meridians theory, there is a close relationship between abdomen and the twelve meridians and the eight extraordinary meridians because of distribution. The Thoroughfare, Conception and Governor Vessels start from the abdomen, and the Belt Vessel surrounds the abdomen and bounds the waist. The two Link Vessels and the two Heel Vessels are also closely related to the abdomen. The abdomen-rubbing qigong exercise can connect the three jiao with abdominal points, connect the Stomach Meridian of Foot Yangming, the Spleen Meridian of Foot Taiyin, the Kidney Meridian of Foot Shaoyin, the Gallbladder Meridian of Foot Shaoyang, the Liver Meridian of Foot Jueyin, and the Conception Vessel. So the abdomen-rubbing qigong exercise plays a role in protecting the spleen and stomach and helps to cure the insomnia and digestive system diseases caused by stomach disharmony.

Bo Zhi-yun, the founder of abdominal acupuncture, believes that there is not only a known system related to qi and blood in the big abdomen around a core of navel [Shenque (CV 8)] , but also is an unknown advanced body control system^[7]. Treatment based on the law of the advanced control system quite effective.

The modern medicine believes that massage is a gentle passive mechanical movement, which belongs to physical therapy. The abdominal massage can increase blood flow to the muscle and intestinal smooth muscle, increase the gastrointestinal wall muscle tension and the lymphatic system function, activate the gastrointestinal secretion, make an acceleration of food digestion, absorption and excretion, and improve in the colon and the small intestine peristalsis.

On the base of the neurophysiology, the mild and slight continuous stimulation can excite the body peripheral nerve function, but restrain the action of the central nervous system^[8]. When the central nervous system is in an inhibitory state, gastrointestinal peristalsis is enhanced, tension and secretion are increased. Abdominal massage and minor irritation can stimulate abdominal and stomach function.

On the view of bioinformatics, each organ of the human body has its own specific biological information (natural frequency, bioelectricity and so on). When the biological information of organ is changed, it can affect the balance of the whole system and even the whole body^[9]. Abdominal massage can produce a kind of information, which may stimulate the abdomen to generate biological information, and then it is input to the relevant organs through a variety of transmission system, adjusting the disorder biological information, and finally helping the diseased internal organs.

Modern clinical medical research has demonstrated that the abdominal massage has a good regulation effect on gastrointestinal function. Ge MF, *et al* proved that the abdomen can regulate intestinal function by

detecting the average frequency of the abdomen and the average amplitude of the changes^[10]. Yao WW found that the curative effect is accurate by Rou-kneading the new Renying point with abdominal massage in treatment of chronic gastritis due to spleen stomach deficiency syndrome^[11]. Deng XY got a good clinical curative effect in treating 48 cases with habitual constipation by moxibustion in special time according to *Zi Wu Liu Zhu* (midnight-noon ebb-flow) theories plus Mo-rubbing the abdomen^[12]. Zhou J, *et al* used only abdominal massage treatment for children with infantile malnutrition in 135 cases, and the clinical effect was also significant^[13]. Xu HB promoted the recovery of gastrointestinal function after appendectomy by abdomen-rubbing qigong exercise^[14]. The abdomen qigong massage was also proved effective in the treatment of lumbar disc herniation, infantile diarrhea and infantile anorexia^[15-17]. Clinically, the abdominal massage is usually used for the treatment of digestive diseases. Keeping practicing abdominal massage for a long time also has a certain effect on the elimination of abdominal fat and obesity^[18].

4 Conclusion

The abdominal massage combines massage with qigong, and combines meridian theory with viscera theory. During the process of abdominal massage, we must pay attention to our breath, combine the limb exercise with our mental focus. So that we can keep fit, prevent and cure disease, and live a healthy life. Besides, the special abdominal massage provides thoughts for later abdominal acupuncture therapy.

In a word, the abdominal massage is a healthy, effective, economical, and painless natural therapy. It helps us achieve a balanced state through harmonizing Ying-Nutrient and Wei-Defensive qi, dredging meridians and regulating qi. It is soft and gentle, easy and convenient to learn. With the improvement of our life, there are more and more requirements for the health-care, so there is a lot of space for abdominal massage to develop and popularize.

Conflict of Interest

There was no conflict of interest in this article.

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