



Linda's Tai Chi Weekly Handout May 30, 2021

### **Fingertips Tell the Story of Qi (chi)**

Over time as you perform T'ai Chi or its related form, Qigong, you may notice that after finishing a session your fingertips become pinkish, with a slight tingling sensation and a feeling of warmth. This is an indication that you have a good flow of qi. T'ai Chi like other forms of exercise, increase blood flow and this manifests itself in the tippy tip of your fingers. Let's read more.

The sensation that comes from T'ai Chi may take time to cultivate as your breathing, focused attention, awareness of your body and smooth continuous movements become natural.

The source of qi that you may experience in your fingertips is three-fold. The first source is the blood flow and the coordination and cooperation among the systems of the body: cardiovascular, pulmonary, respiratory, immune, muscular, nervous, gastro and skeletal (to name a few.) The second source is the mind and our awareness of our physical and emotional being, Qi is the life force and the mind is often referred to as the 'internal' portion of T'ai Chi.

The third source information comes from Dr Peter Wayne, PhD. Dr. Peter Wayne, PhD, is a longtime community T'ai Chi teacher and a researcher at the Harvard Medical School. He is an Associate Professor and Director of Research for the Osher Center for Integrative Medicine and the founding Research Director at the New England School of Acupuncture. He has done research in the benefits of T'ai Chi for Persons with Parkinson Disease.

“Chinese medicine does not emphasize the body as a machine-like assemblage of autonomous parts- separate muscles, bones, and organs, but rather it assumes an intricate coordinated, dynamic living system. “(The Harvard Medical School Guide to Tai Chi) What comes next in this paragraph of his book is most essential to understanding qi. Besides the organs and systems of the body, “there are two additional interrelated, interconnected systems central to T'ai Chi- **the network of meridians (jinglou) or energy channels**, and the all-pervasive network of the body's connective tissue or what the T'ai Chi classics call the sinews.” (Dr Wayne).

These are a network of connective tissue that is comprised of fillers all containing collagen, and other chemicals that bind our organs, muscles, tendons and the like. This has been referred to as the “living matrix.” The living matrix masterfully connects all parts of the body and perhaps the mind. Energy, our qi moves through these channels. As you perform T'ai Chi, blood flows more efficiently and the exchange of oxygen is more efficient as well. In the Chinese understanding of energy, the energy passes through the heart meridian at the wrist to the fingertips. Voila! Pink, warm fingertips.

T'ai Chi is a low-impact exercise that is easy on the body as it mimics the natural movement of the body. If you can walk easily, you can do T'ai Chi. T'ai Chi involves bending, stretching, and turning. These movements help to compress and decompress our veins, which have the capacity to improve circulation. The stretching and relaxing of the muscles keep the muscles flexible, strong, and healthy, and we need that flexibility to maintain a range of motion in the joints. Without it, the muscles shorten and become tight. Then, when you call on the muscles for activity, they are weak and unable to extend all the way. Master Chen Wei used to say that we do not need to warm up for T'ai Chi. T'ai Chi is the warm-up.

How does the stretching, bending, turning and weight shifting improve our overall blood flow, our qi?

Those who exercise regularly tend to have greater blood volume. Our livers detoxify our bodies, filtering waste via our blood and bile. Exercising regularly improves blood flow by strengthening the heart and blood vessels, bolstering this filtration system. At the same time, T'ai Chi as with other exercises can improve the efficiency of the cardiovascular and pulmonary system and increase the exchange of oxygen vital to our overall health and the sensation of qi. T'ai Chi helps circulation as it increases blood flow, gets the heart pumping blood around our bodies faster and helps flush the blood through our arteries,

As we feel the tingling in our hands, fingers and arms, some of that is from the blood flow returning to our hands, and that is, in part, your qi. I encourage you use that physical sensation to become aware of the inside

of your body. If not now, with practice you may feel the sensations as tingling, warmth, movement, or expansion.

Here is an exercise you can do to bring warmth to your hands and fingers

Stand in a neutral, comfortable stance and rub your hands together briskly, as if trying to warm them up. As you do so, mentally hold the intention of bringing your chi force into your hands. Place your hands just below your belly button and take a deep breath. Breathe out, releasing any tension from your body. Do this for about 2- 5 minutes. Listen to the sounds of nature or silence to create the imagery of peace and calm. Image the sun warming your hands and fingertips.

T'ai Chi is rooted in the feet,  
controlled by the waist and  
expressed by the fingers



Peace, *Linda*