



**Fifteen Minutes to Health**

FIFTEEN MINUTES TO HEALTH



# THE SIX ZEN SHIATSU STRETCHES

Open the twelve Qi meridians of acupuncture:

feel their chain of connective tissues as they get an invisible stretch,  
and, as a positive side effect, become more flexible

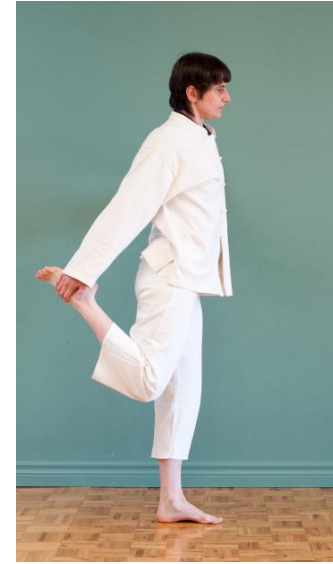
**Gall Bladder  
Liver**



**Lungs  
Large Intestine**



**Stomach  
Spleen**



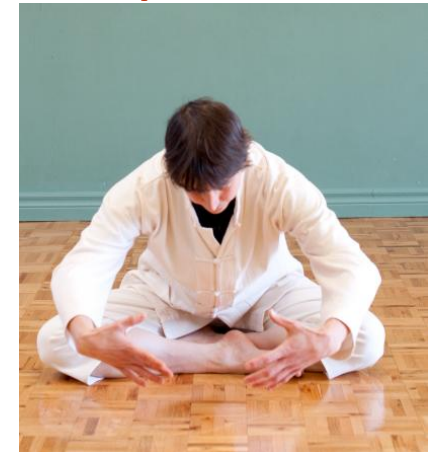
**Heart  
Small Intestine**



**Bladder  
Kidneys**



**Pericardium  
Triple Heater**



# A Word of Caution

- This tutorial is for people who attended the Fifteen Minutes to Health program, level I
- Please do not attempt to perform these stretches if you have not participated in this class or a formal training of the Zen Shiatsu Meridian Stretches
- Always stay within your comfort zone, do not push yourself. Even if you cannot assume a posture you will get all the benefits of each stretch, from applying the so-called Invisible Stretching principle (as practiced in class)
- Enjoy this wonderful routine.
- Thank you !

# Liver - Gall Bladder stretch



- Open your feet wide, keeping them parallel
- Breathe out and lean to your left side, sliding your left hand along the side of your leg
- Simultaneously, rise the right arm up, palm towards the ceiling
- Settle in a comfortable position
- Breathe out and relax
- Breathe in and extend your right hand further up and away, doing an invisible stretch
- Breath out and relax, lowering the right arm while coming back up and stand straight
- Take a couple of relaxed breaths and start again on the same side.
- Then do two repetitions on the right side

# Lungs – Large Intestine stretch



- Open your feet wide (but less than before), keeping them parallel
- Breathe out and lean forward keeping your low back flat, while grabbing your thumbs behind your back
- Keep equal weight on the heels and balls of your feet, feel a gentle stretch of your hamstring, back of knees, calves. Keep your head in line with your back, do not look up, and do not bring your chin to your chest: your neck is aligned with your spine. Keep it easy for your body
- Breathe out and relax
- Breathe in and squeeze your shoulder blades, raising your arms behind you
- Breathe out, separate the thumbs, bend the knees and come back up.
- Do a second repetition, reversing the grip of your thumbs

# Stomach – Spleen stretch



- Come to a wall (or a chair), standing besides it and putting your left hand on it for balance
- Grab your right foot with your right hand
- If comfortable, push your right knee slightly down and back to feel a gentle stretch of the quads. Press your foot against your hand to enhance that stretch a little more
- Breathe out and relax
- Breathe in, press the foot and the knee down a little more, make yourself tall like stretching your torso and top of head upwards.
- Breathe out and release your foot, standing by the wall
- Repeat a second time
- Then turn to the other side, supporting yourself on the wall with your right hand, and grab your left foot.
- Repeat the stretch on the left side twice

# Heart – Small Intestine stretch



- Sit cross legged with your torso straight, sole of your feet touching. If your chest or low back tends to collapse, place a pillow or a folded blanket under your sitting bone, finding the elevation that will allow your back to be straight
- Imagine a big satellite dish in front of you and you are going to lean forward, resting your arms on the dish.

- Breathe in and make yourself tall

- Breathe out and lean forward slowly, forming a circle with your arms, with the pinky finger side of the arm down and out

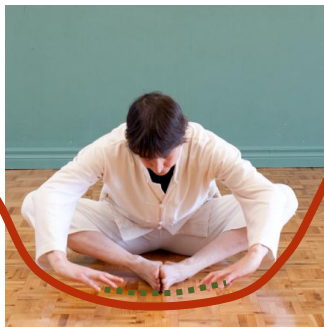
- As you lean forward, progressively feel an invisible stretch of your armpits, triceps, outside of forearm, side of hand and pinky finger (Heart meridian)

- Rest forward for a breath or two

- Come back slowly, leaving your arms and hand on the satellite dish, feeling the outside of the pinky finger, forearm, triceps; and shoulder blades spreading apart. Breathe in and accentuate the shoulder blade spread, feeling the entire Small Intestine meridian.

- Breathe out and relax, sitting up straight again

- Repeat the stretch a second time



# Bladder – Kidneys stretch



- Sit with your legs in front of you (remove pillow or blanket from under your sitting bone), with your torso straight. If you can't sit straight, simply bend your knees a little bit
- Breathe in, make yourself tall, circle your arms up above your head
- Breathe out, move forward, reaching your knees, shins, ankles or toes with your hands. It does not matter at all if you cannot reach your toes, as long as you keep your low back straight and do not collapse your chest. It is totally OK to bend your knees a little
- Breathe out and relax
- Breathe in and exert a very gentle pull forward for an invisible stretch
- Breathe out and come back up.
- Repeat the stretch a second time



# Heart Protector – Triple Heater stretch



- Sit cross legged with your torso straight. Right leg closer to your body. If your chest or low back tends to collapse, place a pillow or a folded blanket under your sitting bone, finding the elevation that will allow your back to be straight
- Imagine a big exercise ball in front of you and you are going to lean forward, hugging the ball.
- Breathe in and make yourself tall
- Breathe out and lean forward slowly, forming a circle with your arms, palms towards you
- As you lean forward, progressively feel an invisible stretch of your pecs, middle of biceps, middle line of forearm, middle of palm and middle finger (Heart Protector meridian)
- Rest forward for a breath or two



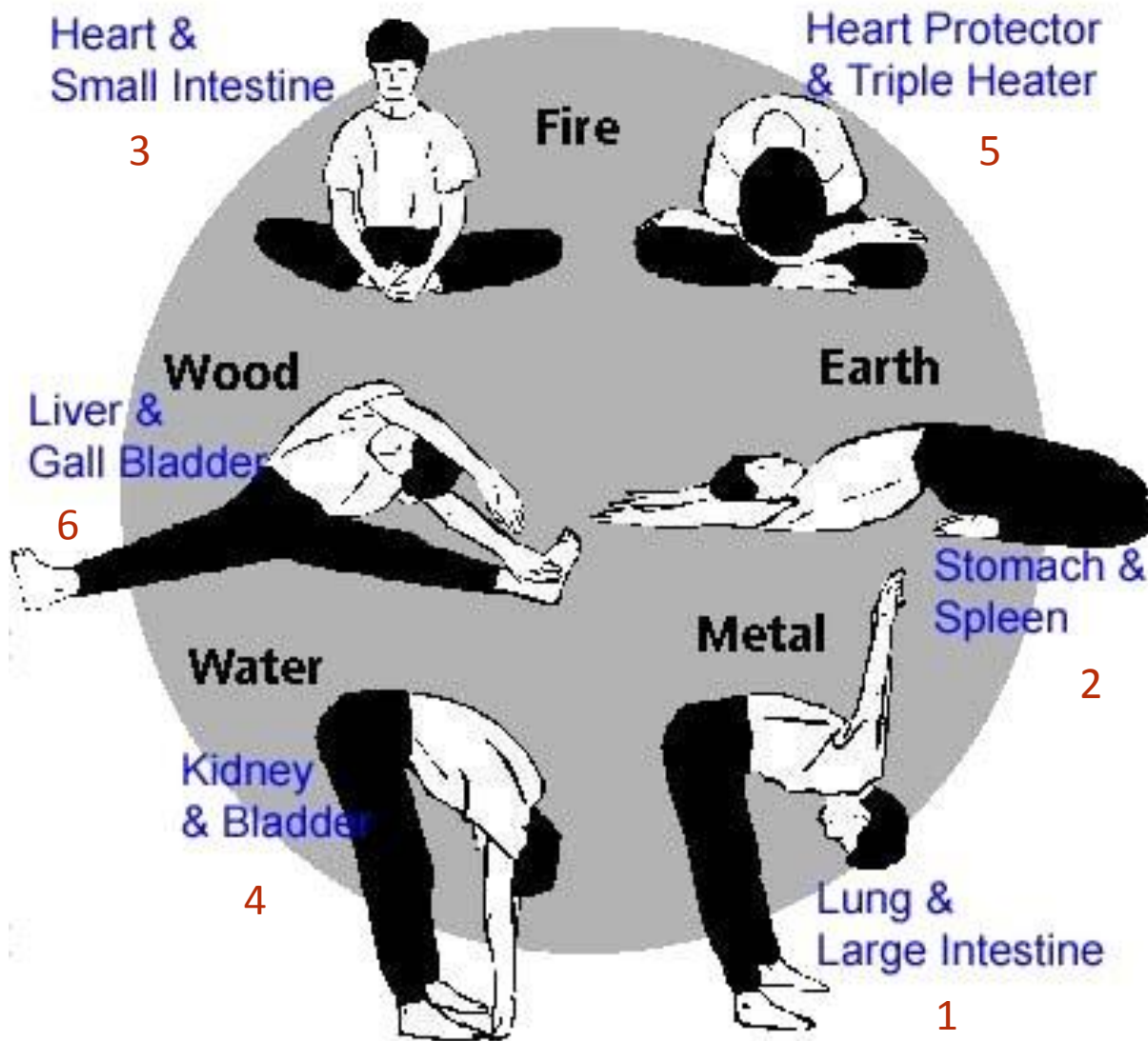
- Come back slowly, leaving your arms and hands down, feeling the outside of the middle finger, forearm, biceps, and shoulder blades spreading apart. Breathe in and accentuate the shoulder blade spread feeling the entire Triple Heater meridian.
- Breathe out and relax, sitting up straight again
- Repeat the stretch a second time

Zen Shiatsu Stretches: more info

# History

- Designed by the founder of Zen Shiatsu therapy: Shizuto Masunaga
- Masunaga had a special gift: he could feel the Qi of the meridians (like some people see more colors or hear more sounds than most of us)
- His sequence of six stretches position the limbs and joints in a way that optimizes the flow of Qi in the meridians
- The stretches taught in the 15 Minutes to Health curriculum have been adapted for people of all levels of flexibility and to increase the perception of Qi flowing in the meridians, in particular using the Invisible Stretch method

# Original Stretches



- In their original version of the Zen Shiatsu stretches, most stretches are more demanding in terms of flexibility, making it more difficult to feel the meridians.
- Originally, the first stretch is the Lungs – Large Intestine one. The order follows the so-called TCM Organ clock: see numbering on the picture.
- In this picture, the correspondence of the Organs with the Five Elements is shown.

# Qi Meridians: more info

Where they flow

Main function of their Internal Organ



# What are Qi Meridians?

- Like rivers carry water to make land fertile, Qi meridians, according to the Chinese system of health, distribute the Qi energy of our Internal Organs throughout the body and the mind.
- The energy of our Organs needs to be balanced for good health
- Insufficient Qi in the Organs and meridians, or excessive Qi result in dis-ease

- To be continued, come back soon!