

# MAKKO HO STRETCHES

These exercises are designed to alleviate physical discomfort and enhance the smooth flow of your energy system (according to Shiatsu tradition). **They can be a useful tool to self diagnose and become aware of areas of tension.** Each stretch relates to a specific energy channel in the body and may help alleviate imbalances in that particular organ meridian.

Please remember that in Chinese and Japanese medicine, the name of the organs have a wider meaning than what we normally refer to in Western culture. Please get advice from an experienced Shiatsu practitioner or Acupuncturist to learn more about it.

## 1) LUNG and LARGE INTESTINE

Stand with your feet wide slightly more than shoulder-width apart. Hook your thumbs behind your back, spreading your fingers as much as you can.

As you inhale into your abdomen, try to lengthen your spine as if you were supported by a string from the ceiling.

As you exhale, bend forward slowly keeping your back straight, your knees softly locked and stretch your arms over your head.

Breathe into your abdomen and imagine the breath flowing from your core out to your arms and legs. You should feel a gentle pulling sensation along the back of your legs, back and arms.

Repeat the breathing in this position another 2/3 times, then gently return to your starting position.



## 2) STOMACH and SPLEEN

Try to kneel on the floor on the top of your feet with your knees together and your hands behind you. If you can, inhale and lean back into your hands. As you exhale, gently push your hips towards the ceiling and allow your head to drop back. You should feel a gentle pulling sensation along the front of your thighs and the chest.

If you are very flexible, you may try to come down with your elbows onto the floor or onto your back with the arms stretched above your head. Always be aware of any tension in the lower back and become aware of your limitation rather than pushing yourself too much.

Repeat the breathing in this position another 2/3 times, then gently return to your starting position.



## 3) HEART and SMALL INTESTINE

Sit on the floor with the back straight and bring the soles of your feet together, drawing your feet as close as possible to your groin.

As you inhale, lengthen your back towards the feet. As you exhale allow your head to relax toward the feet with your elbows in front of your legs, while trying to keep your knees as close as possible to the floor.

Repeat the breathing in this position another 2/3 times, then gently return to your starting position.



#### 4) **BLADDER and KIDNEY**

Sit on the floor with your legs extended in front of you.

As you inhale into your abdomen, lengthen the spine and pull your toes towards you. As you exhale, slowly stretch forward from your waist, keeping your back straight and your knees softly locked. It is more important to learn to relax into this stretch and keep your back straight, rather than grabbing your toes.

You should feel a gentle pulling sensation along the back of your legs, back and arms.

Repeat the breathing in this position another 2/3 times, then gently return to your starting position.



#### 5) **HEART PROTECTOR and TRIPLE HEATER**

Sit on the floor with your legs crossed, with the left leg in front. Place your right hand on the left knee and, with your left arm in front, place it on the right knee.

As you inhale, lengthen your spine. As you exhale, gently and slowly bend forward.

You should feel a gentle pulling sensation along your upper back and down the outside of your arms and legs.

Repeat the breathing in this position another 2/3 times, then gently return to your starting position.



#### 6) **GALL BLADDER and LIVER**

Sit on the floor with the legs as wide apart as possible and your toes pointed to the ceiling. As you inhale into your abdomen, stretch your arms towards the ceiling and clasp your hands. Exhale.

Take another big breath in and on the exhalation, gently lean towards one foot, keeping your back straight.

You should feel a gentle pulling sensation along the outside of the leg you are leaning towards and down the inside of the opposite leg.

Repeat the breathing in this position another 2/3 times, then gently return to your starting position and repeat on the other side.



#### 7) **SAVASANA**

Lie down on your back and allow your breathing to slow down. Try to become aware of any sensation in the body, such as pulsing, tingling, throbbing, heat, cold, and bring your attention to it. Hopefully you will experience a feeling of being alive and have a sense of your energy circulating throughout.

These stretches are a great complement to the [Do-in routine](#) and if performed daily, they should soon enhance your sense of well being and physical flexibility.