

# Qi Gong for Heel Pain

By Lisa B. O'Shea

Published in *New Health Digest*, September 2006 Issue



Over the years I have treated quite a few people for heel pain. Sometimes people have been previously diagnosed by their doctor as having a bone spur, sometimes they have had trauma to the heel that resulted in lingering pain, other times the heel pain has mysteriously appeared and would come and go depending on their activity level. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), for heel pain to occur there has to be either a localized blockage of the normal energy flow through the heel or a weakness in the Kidney/Bladder energy of the whole body. Even if there has been trauma to the heel itself or a bone spur (which usually grows there because of too much chronic stress on the heel bone), the solution to the heel pain is the same. Heel pain can often be alleviated completely by improving the energy flow through the heel area and the meridian (energy channel) that flows through the heel as well as increasing the energy of the Kidney/Bladder system. The following techniques are quite helpful for eliminating heel pain.

## **Meridian Visualization:**

Visualize a stream of deep blue water flowing from the inside corner of each eye, up the head and down the back of the head just to either side of the midline of the body. Continue the streams down both sides of the spine, down the back of the legs, through each calf, below the outside of the ankle bones and along the outside edges of foot to the pinky toes and out of the body. This is the path that the Bladder channel follows and this visualization clears out blockages in the energy flow to the heel. Visualize the flowing blue water for as long as feels good and repeat daily.

## **Eight Pieces of Brocade (#6)**

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and your arms relaxed by your sides. Turn the palms up and inhale as you raise them up to chest level. Rotate your palms toward your chest then down and continue rotating out and up until your palms face the ceiling with the fingers pointing toward each other. Exhale and press both your hands up toward ceiling. Imagine you are pushing against ceiling, fingers toward each other. Keep your chin down slightly and relaxed and your knees slightly bent.

Breathe normally and focus your attention on the spine opposite from belly button just below the surface of the skin. This point is called the Mingmen point which means "life door." Pause for a moment and imagine this point warming up or a bright shining ball of energy centered there. Then bend forward at your waist as far as comfortable and hold both your legs behind the knees or any place that is comfortable. Now focus your attention on the ball of each foot. This point is called Yong Chuan which means "bubbling well." Pause for a moment and imagine this point warming up as you did the first point, Mingmen.

Now, straighten back up slowly by bending your knees first and bringing your hips underneath you before straightening your back. This helps to reduce the strain on your lower back as you straighten up. Let your arms relax by your sides. If you have low back pain and bending over makes it worse, you can skip the part where you bend at the waist. When you get to the part where you lower your hands, just place your palms against the back of your hips or thighs and continue with the visualization of the points on the feet. Once your back is feeling better you can include the waist bend. Repeat this exercise two to three times per day, doing as many repetitions in a row as feels good without causing any strain.

**Lisa B. O'Shea Certified Qi Gong Therapist and Instructor**

Qi Gong Institute of Rochester 595 Blossom Rd. Ste. 307 Rochester, NY 14610  
(585) 377-2044 Toll Free: (877) 346-4017 [www.Qigongrochester.com](http://www.Qigongrochester.com)

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## Dantian Meditation

This meditation will build energy in the Kidney/Bladder system to keep the legs and feet healthy and strong. Sit with your hands on your lap, palm down or facing your belly. Feet flat on the floor, knees at a 90 degree angle. Keep your back straight and relaxed. Shoulders should be relaxed and chin in slightly. Arch in the lower back should be flattened slightly as well. Touch the tip of your tongue to the roof of your mouth unless you have high blood pressure. If you have high blood pressure, place the tip of your tongue behind your bottom teeth inside your mouth. Put your mind on the Dantian which is about 1 ½" below the belly button and centered inside the body. Breathe in slowly and smoothly. Picture that the air goes all the way down to the Dantian. As you inhale, the belly expands, as you exhale the belly sinks back in naturally. Picture the coals of a fire glowing brightly deep in your belly. Imagine each breath you take is blowing on those coals making them brighter and warmer. Continue this meditation for as long as is comfortable. Signs that you are done are feeling like you need to get up and move or an ache or pain somewhere that doesn't go away. Repeat daily.

Sometimes the heel pain can also be caused by the calf muscles becoming too tight. This kind of heel pain is often worse when standing up after you have been lying down or sitting down. The following stretch is quite helpful for this kind of heel pain.

## Heel Stretch:

Sit on a chair with your foot out in front of you with the heel touching the floor and the rest of the foot angled up comfortably. Using a strap or a belt, run the middle of the strap under the ball of the foot while holding the ends of the strap in each hand. As you inhale try to push the ball of your foot down toward the floor as if you were stepping on the gas pedal of a car while holding the strap firmly with your hands so that the strap resists your attempt to push down. You are using the strap to hold back your foot from pushing down so the foot doesn't actually move toward the floor. Then as you exhale, relax your foot and stop trying to push down and using your hands, pull the strap toward you to create a comfortable stretch in the calf. As you pull, the toes and ball of the foot will move toward you to get the stretch in the calf muscles. Repeat the stretch several times with the knee bent and then again with the knee straight.

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