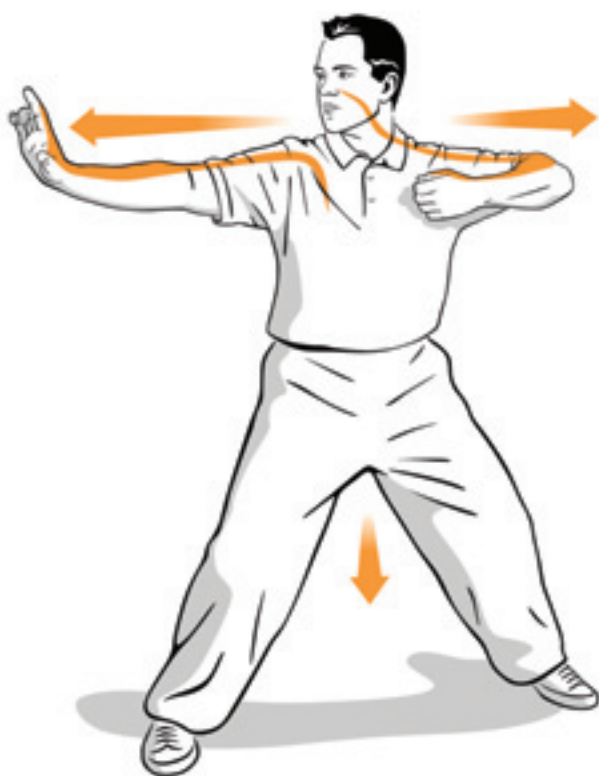


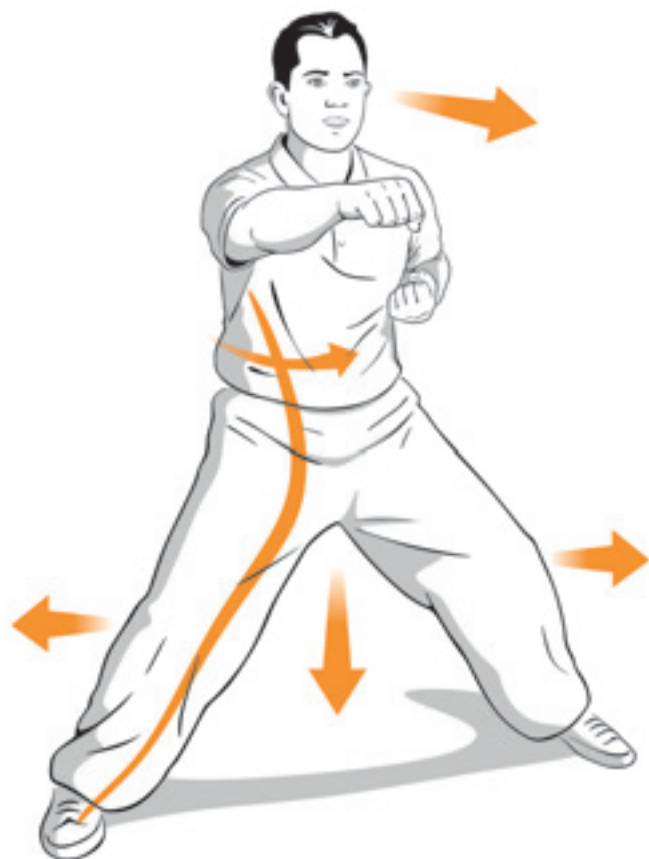
Ba duan jin is one of the most recognised names of qigong throughout the world. The name often translates as eight pieces of silk brocade, a name given to the movements to represent the high quality of health it brings to the body and mind, like that of the finest silk used for traditional empirical brocades. Other titles are, 'eight treasures' or 'eight movements'



Historically, as with many traditional systems, the proof of origin is slightly jaded. The most reputable story is that of Marshal Yue Fei (born 1103AD) who developed the eight movements, from an original 12, to improve the health of his soldiers. Yue Fei's army was formidable in battle and this cemented the name of the eight brocades in history and folk tales, as the glue that made his army legendary.

Yue Fei also taught martial methods of combat to his soldiers, some of which are embodied in the eight brocades. He is also regarded as the creator of xing yi and eagle claw styles of combat.

In terms of energetic health, the movements follow the natural cycle of qi as it passes through the energy system every 24 hours. Regular practice helps to promote the smooth flow of this cycle, which eventually, through daily dedication, creates momentum in the energy body. This momentum is like the pendulum of a grandfather clock, as



**I**like the eight treasures as it gives a sense of each posture being something of great worth, that brings wealth, wealth being our personal wellness.

There are numerous variations of the ba duan jin. Over time there have been further developments. But also in many cases, loss of the authentic method and outcome. Some of the names of each movement may also be different. Many martial arts systems have their own specific version, so don't be put off if your system is different. Any experienced teacher will be able to explain why they do it their way and for what reason, so just ask.

In essence, the eight movements help to regulate (harmonise) qi through physical postures and movements. These postures stimulate the muscular, fascia, blood and lymph systems. The practice also helps to regulate the nervous system which brings clarity to the emotional mind.

Each posture stimulates, or activates, specific aspects of the body by directing blood and qi through various actions of tension and release. These aspects or channels, closely relate to the energy pathways that are used by acupuncture and tui na massage. You may know them as meridians.

it assists the movement of blood to resolve stagnation (lack of movement) of qi and blood that daily life brings with it.

Ba duan jin is a remarkably useable form of physical therapy, that you apply to yourself. By 'usable' I mean you can use it to improve physical health, treat injuries, strengthen the body and heal emotional well-being. The intention of the practice is what makes it different from other physical methods, it becomes internal. Having just eight main postures, it's also easy to remember and requires little space to practise. This makes it suitable, or more enjoyable, for those who dislike remembering long forms.

When you apply the postures or movements correctly, you gradually build a connection to the fascia system, or RE-connect it, much as tai chi and yoga do, although the intention or attention may differ.

Building this connection eventually allows you to understand the structure of the body, and with time, to learn how to notice deviations in health or the energy body, so you can prevent any further symptoms, or at least take action sooner. Having knowledge of the medicine that goes with ba duan jin helps a lot too.

When it comes to healing the body and mind, the first action is to regulate the physical body. Many emotional disturbances are representations of the physical body, so it's a good place to start. Ba duan jin does this extremely well.

It is quite common for people to think they have no energy, or low energy, when they feel weak, tired or fatigued. Most of the time it is a lack of movement or restriction in the body/qi/mind paradigm that causes a sense of deficiency, not depletion of it.

Removal of such restrictions through ba duan jin, allows the functions of qi to regain harmony. When enough qi is available, or better still, accessible, we can use BDJ to strengthen the physical body and build resistance to ill health and emotional intrusion. When these two aspects are in harmony it allows the shen or higher emotional mind to develop. This phase is always personal and there are many systems of qigong available for such cultivation.

A traditional journey of development would be, ba duan jin, yi jing jing (muscle/tendon changes) and zhan zhuang (pile training), although a full system of BDJ contains many muscle/tendon changing methods as well as zhan zhuang.

I think the best way to utilise BDJ is to think of it as gently 'wringing' out the body, like twisting and squeezing dirty water from a dishcloth, but very specific. The movements are easily adjusted to suit current health and abilities which makes it suitable for all shapes, sizes and ages. As long as the principles and methods are adhered to, the outcome should be the same – greater health.

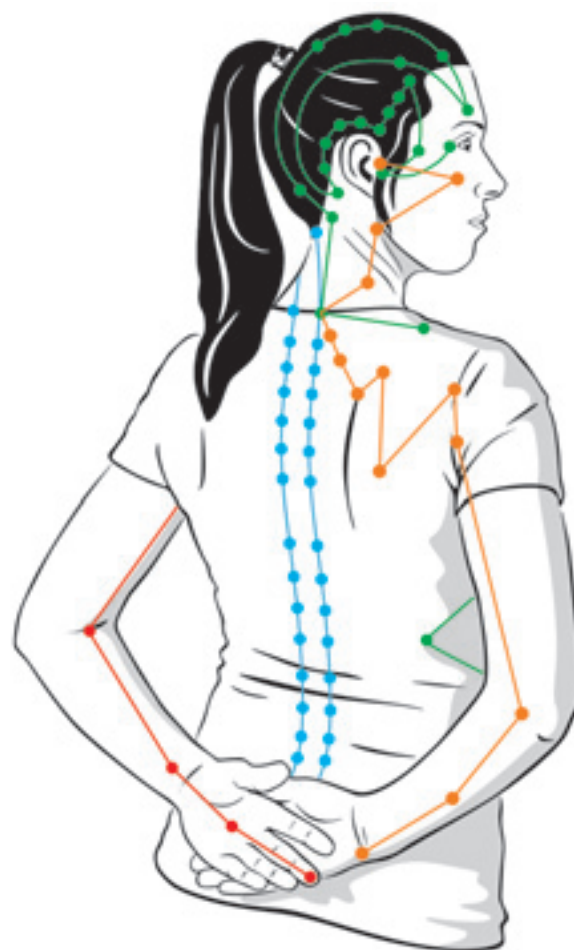
Aside from maintaining the correct order of the movements to promote the cyclic flow of the vessels, ba duan jin can be utilised via the application of five element theory. Some BDJ systems do exactly that, working more with five phases of earth, metal, water, wood and fire. Some work with the extra vessels, our deeper reservoirs of qi. Then it becomes a system of adjustment for medical benefit, especially when you incorporate the practice of zhan zhuang postures to cultivate energy.

Ba duan jin is the bread and butter of a good preventative health practice.

The targeted 'clearing' process of BDJ makes it an excellent partner to any other external or internal practice. When you have a clear, unrestricted flow of qi, it enhances whatever you choose to do, the connection is simply just better.

You can use it as a diagnostic tool to discover injuries or changes in structural feelings that might become problematic.

To give you a brief insight into the functions of each



posture or movement, here is a list of the movements and their internal association.

1. Supporting the sky – to regulate the sanjiao (triple warmer) and activate the energy system.
2. Archer draws a bow – to stimulate and strengthen lung qi, nourishes the liver and blood.
3. Plucking the stars from heaven – to stimulate the spleen and stomach for improved digestion, energy and clear thinking.
4. Turning the head – to ward off injurious feelings and a sense of apprehension. To build courage.
5. Wagging the head and tail – to cool the hearts fire, condition the 'qua' and stimulate 'ming men', the gate of life.
6. Carrying the moon – to nourish the kidneys, strengthen the spine and connect to the earth.
7. Thrusting fist with gazing eyes – to strengthen the physical body, calm the liver and nourish the sinews.
8. Lifting the heels – to improve posture, balance and calm the breath.

As you can see, ba duan jin has many benefits for health and wellness when incorporated into daily practice. If you know your own illnesses or injuries, you can also use the postures in isolation to improve recovery. Using a supportive method of 'mother-child' (five phases theory) applications can provide even better results.

All in all, you can use ba duan jin as a simple physical exercise or preparation method, a method of restoring health and healing injuries, or connecting deeper to the practice and you can use it as a vessel for self-discovery. Better still, open your heart, empty your cup, gift yourself some time each day to practise and see where BDJ can take you. 🧘

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