



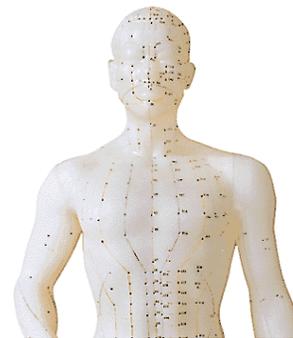
Guelph Tai Chi for Health
Linda Kearns, Instructor

What are the "Energy Channels" (Meridians)

In previous hand-outs we defined "qi" and "qigong". We know that there is a special force called "qi" and that we practice "qigong" to stimulate the production and movement of "qi" but where does it go?

Just as blood flows through our circulatory system, qi moves through channels that have been mapped through many centuries by practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine. When the "channels" are blocked qi energy cannot flow properly. Where there are blockages there is potential for disease. The channels or *meridians* run all over the surface of the body, like rivers, directing qi both into and away from the internal organs and body structures (muscle, fascia, bone, etc.)

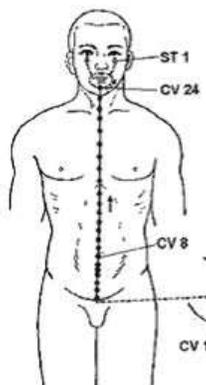
There are twelve pairs of primary channels, lung, large intestine, stomach, spleen, heart, small intestine, bladder, kidney, pericardium, triple heater, gall bladder, liver.



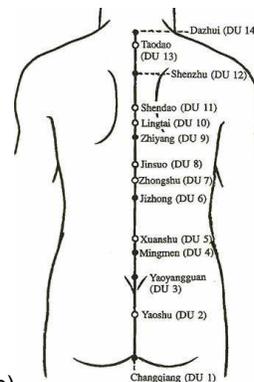
Exercise: Find a website that shows the pathways of the twelve pairs of primary channels.

(Hint: here's one <http://www.acupuncture.com/education/points/index.htm>)

In addition to the twelve primary channels there are eight "reservoirs" of qi called vessels. Two of these are considered major vessels, the (Du Mei) governing vessel and the (Ren Mei) conception vessel.



The conception vessel (yin)



The governing vessel (yang)

These are located along the centre line of the front and the back of the torso and head and run into each other, creating a closed loop ("microcosmic orbit"). These are important because they must remain full of qi and allow qi to flow smoothly so that they may perform their regulatory function of the qi supply and movement in the twelve meridians. The natural

flow of energy in the closed loop or orbit is the "Fire Path", down the front of the torso and up the spine. The opposite path is the "Wind Path", up the centre of the front of the torso and down the spine. Together these work to regulate our energy, ensuring that we are neither too yin or too yang. We are said to be too yang, for example, if we are excited or angry or have eaten too much of the wrong kind of food. Too much yang chi flowing to the body's organs can be damaging. The "Wind Path" circulation can help to counter-balance too much Yang.

The centre intersection point between these two major vessels in the head, chest and lower abdomen are the three *dantiens*. The *dantiens* will be the subject of a separate study paper.

There are a number of important openings along the vessels. These represent entrances or exits for qi and attachments to the major meridians and vessels. They can be places of energy flow, stagnation, or distortion.

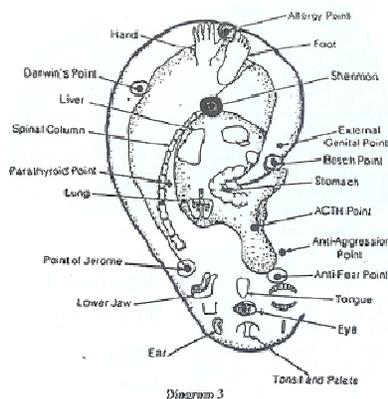
Some of these are:

- Yongquan, or bubbling well, in the centre of the bottom of the feet
- ming-men, or the gate of life, in the middle of the back.
- baihui - centre of the skull.
- laogong - centre of the palm.
- huiyin - between the genitals and anus.

To completely understand the principles behind qigong and tai chi movement and their health-giving potential, it is essential to understand the concept of energy flow. It is difficult for the western mind to comprehend because we can't touch it, feel it or see it the same way we can blood, muscle, even nerves. It may remain for some a matter of faith.

For more detailed information about meridians and channels:

- Jarmey, Chris. The Theory and Practice of Taiji Qigong. North Atlantic Books, 2005.
- MacRitchie, James. Chi Kung: Cultivating Personal Energy. Dorset : Element, 1993.
- Jwing-Ming, Yang. The Root of Chinese Chi Kung. Boston: YMAA, 1995
- Requena, Yves. Chi Kung; The Chinese Art of Mastering Energy. Rochester, Vt. : Healing Arts Press, 1995.



Acupuncture points on the ear