This is part one of an article on Meridians. We hear more and more about Alternative Medicine being practiced in hospitals, ERs, and ORs. It’s a confusing mode of medicine that we have not been trained for so we often ignore it. This article is a “primer” – just the basics - to try to help you understand meridians and to show you ways to use the knowledge in your Ai Chi practice.

Meridians – they conduct energy throughout the body. Our bodies have many different physical systems – immune, endocrine, lymphatic, cardiovascular, etc., and also an energetic system. This article is all about the energetic system.

The Chinese discovered and identified twelve meridians along which energy travels in the human body. Like copper traces on an electronic circuit board, they run throughout the body delivering and moving energy. The Chinese were especially concerned with eliminating energy blockages in the energetic body channels. These meridians are also called energy channels or body channels or acupuncture meridians or nadis. As you’ll see they were named by the life function associated with them.

Meridians affect every organ and every physiological system: immune, nervous, endocrine, circulatory, respiratory, digestive, skeletal, muscular, and lymphatic. Similar to the way an artery carries blood, a meridian carries energy. If a meridian’s energy is blocked, the system it feeds is in jeopardy.

There are physical tests that demonstrate that meridians exist. Some are viewed through radioactive isotopes injected into the acupuncture points that show duct-like tubules about 0.5 – 1.5 microns in diameter. Meridians have also been seen through infrared photography.

Energy circulates along meridians in the human body in a similar way that radio waves travel through space. These radiate to and resonate with all cells in the body. Although imperceptible, like radio waves, electricity moving faster than the speed of light continuously charges the body. When this energy flow is unrestricted, the body harmonizes the flow to optimize body functioning. Sometimes when we abuse or cause stress to our bodies, sometimes the stress is so intense or so constant that, it “overloads” the circuit. The “circuit breaker” pops and needs to be reset before energy can flow properly.

Resetting the circuit breaker can be done in a few ways. Acupuncture and acupressure are two common ways. Another way, which we’ll discuss here, is to open the area with stretching while oxygenating with diaphragmatic breathing – in other words, with Ai Chi.

It is difficult to stretch or affect the meridians on land without acupressure or acupuncture. Ai Chi and the water allows for healing by clearing blockages in the meridians.
Here are the first four meridians (lung, spleen, large intestine and stomach) with a short overview of the benefits seen with activation. We also include Ai Chi postures that create the activation of flow of each meridian. You’ll be able to match the first 13 Ai Chi postures to your clients’ specific needs.

**The Lung Meridian**

Lungs do a vital job. Each day, you take about 23,000 breaths, which bring almost 10,000 quarts of air into your lungs. The air that you breathe in contains several gasses, including oxygen, which your cells need to function. With each breath, your lungs add fresh oxygen to your blood, which then carries it to your cells. The main function of your lungs is respiration.

Lung function normally peaks in the late teens and early twenties. After the early twenties, lung function declines about 1 percent a year over the rest of a person’s lifetime. Lung function decreases about 2 percent a year for people who smoke.

**Lung Meridian activation will assist with the following disorders or issues:**

- Hemoptysis, cough, asthma, congested and sore throat, a sensation of fullness in the chest.
- Pain in the supraclavicular fossa, shoulder, back and anterior border of the medial aspect of the arm.
- Heat in the wrist and/or palms, shortness of breath, enuresis, and frequency of urination.

**Ai Chi postures or function that may create a healing flow:**

- All Upper Extremity Ai Chi postures
As you can see in the illustration the Lung Meridian has a little “zig-zag” in the shoulder and another little zig in the wrist. All external/internal shoulder rotation, shoulder flexion and extension will be beneficial. Also pronation and supination of the hand will positively affect the “zig” in the wrist.

The Large Intestine / Colon Meridian

The intestine is the portion of the digestive tract between the stomach and the anus. It is divided into two major sections: small intestine and large intestine. The large intestine is responsible for reabsorption of electrolytes and water and elimination of undigested food and waste.

If the intestines are not working properly, Crohn's disease, constipation, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, or Tapeworms may be present. Sometimes the intestine can protrude through an abnormal opening in the body and cause a hernia.

Large Intestine Meridian activation will assist with the following disorders or issues:

- Epistaxis, watery nasal discharge, toothache, congested and sore throat, pain in the neck, anterior part of the shoulder and anterior border of the lateral aspect of the upper limb, borborygmos, abdominal pain, diarrhea, and dysentery.
- Toothache and/or coldness in the teeth, deafness, a feeling of compression in the chest and/or diaphragm.

Ai Chi postures or function that may create a healing flow:

- All inhalation and exhalation
- Shifting
- Gathering
- Freeing
• Uplifting

The Stomach Meridian

The stomach is a highly acidic and smelly environment (maintained at pH 1.5 - 2 by the secretion of hydrochloric acid) with peptidase digestive enzymes, primarily pepsin. Pepsinogen is secreted by G-cells of the stomach and the acidic environment activates pepsinogen to form pepsin. In fact, the stomach's interior can secrete 2 to 3 liters of gastric fluid per day. It breaks down the food to enter the intestine.

Stomach Meridian activation will assist with the following disorders or issues:
• Borborygmos, abdominal distension, edema, epigastric pain, vomiting, hunger, epistaxis, deviation of the mouth, congested and sore throat, pain in the chest, abdomen, and lateral aspect of the lower limbs, fever, and mania.
• Emotional disorders such as depression or manic behavior, muscular atrophy, weakness in the lower limb or atrophy, congested and sore throat, sudden hoarseness.

Ai Chi postures that may create a healing flow:
• Accepting
• Accepting w/Grace
• Balancing
• Shifting
• Rounding
• Freeing

The Spleen Meridian

The spleen helps in immunity (protection against infection), stores blood for the body and releases it when needed, destroys bacteria, destroys worn out and damaged platelets, and destroys worn out and damaged red blood cells.
Spleen Meridian activation will assist with the following disorders or issues:
- Belching, vomiting, epigastric pain, abdominal distension, loose stools, jaundice, heaviness of the body, lassitude, stiffness and pain in the root of the tongue, swelling and coldness in the medial aspect of the thigh.
- Abdominal spasm, cholera with vomiting and/or diarrhea.
- General aching and/or weakness of the limb joints.

Ai Chi postures that may create a healing flow:
- Freeing
- Gathering
- Rounding
- Shifting
- Soothing
- Accepting
- Accepting w/Grace
- Balancing

We will cover the remaining 8 meridians in successive issues. Continue to use Ai Chi to create healing in the body with better energy flow through the meridians.
2. Floating
3. Uplifting
4. Enclosing
5. Folding
6. Soothing
7. Gathering