

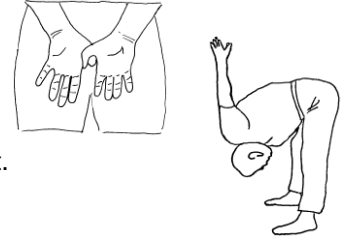
MAKKO-HO STRETCHES

Makko-ho stretches come from an exercise system used in Japan. With these stretches, each routine stretches a Yin-Yang pair of acupuncture meridians, promoting well-being. Do these stretches GENTLY & with the breath moving easily in and out of your body. They should not be uncomfortable. If they are, ease up. Don't push yourself. It is not about reaching the ultimate position. Support yourself, if needed. Stay in each position for several full and easy breaths. Allow your awareness to come into your body. Take a moment to feel truly full and empty of breath. As you inhale, feel your breath fill the center of your body and then fill out your extremities. As you exhale, feel your breath leave your extremities first and your center last. Move very slowly between each position.

Do not force yourself into any of the positions. Relax and enjoy your Makko-ho stretches. It all comes with time and practice.

LUNG & LARGE INTESTINE MERIDIANS:

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Hook your thumbs together behind your back. Stretch your chest open by reaching your hands down towards the floor. Bend forward from the waist and let your hands reach up towards the ceiling. Stay for 2 or 3 breaths & then return to standing. Hook your thumbs the other way & repeat. Also helps with improving range of motion in the shoulders. Channels are along the outside of the forearm and upper arm to the shoulder.



STOMACH & SPLEEN MERIDIANS

Sit on the floor in *seiza* (hero) position with heels open so your hips are on the floor. Lean back, reach out behind you & place your hands on the floor to stretch the front of the body open. You may never get your bottom to the floor. Be very aware of not straining your knees. If this is comfortable, you can drop to your elbows. If your sacrum and knees are comfortable in that position, you can flatten onto the floor and stretch your arms up over your head. Try to pull your knees closer together. Don't allow your back to arch. If it does, you need to come back up to your elbows or hands. DO NOT push your body through pain in this pose. Ease up! Always think of your knees. Channels are along the top of the thighs just on either side of the middle.



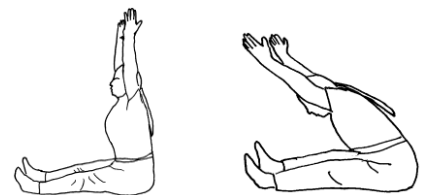
HEART & SMALL INTESTINE MERIDIANS

Sit on the floor with the soles of your feet together. Leave space and do not pull your feet too far into your body. Rest your hands on your ankles. Straighten your back and, without closing the front of your body, reach your belly towards your lap while pressing your elbows into your knees. It helps to think of your shoulder blades pulled in & held against your rib cage. This helps to heighten the awareness of these meridians. Stay in this position for several deep breaths. Relax a little more forward before your change position for the next stretch. Channels are on the inside of the forearm and upper arm and shoulder.



KIDNEY & BLADDER MERIDIANS

From the previous position, stretch your legs out in front of you. Dorsiflex your ankles (pull your toes back toward your knees). Straighten your spine. Reach your arms up over your head and, without closing the front of your body, lean forward bringing your belly toward your lap. Stay for several deep breaths. If when you start this you can use a rolled towel under your knees. Channels are along the back of legs and up the spine.

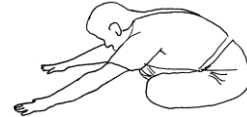


MAKKO-HO STRETCHES

PERICARDIUM & TRIPLE BURNER MERIDIANS

Sit cross legged or in *half lotus* position (easy cross legs position). Hug your shoulders with your arms. Begin with one arm & leg on one side of your body on the top of the cross over. Keep our spine straight and bring your belly closer to your lap. With your next breath, drop your hands from your shoulders to your knee. With a third breath, drop your hands to the floor & reach your fingers out away from your body. Come back to sitting and change arms and legs so the other side is on top, Then repeat stretch.

Channels are along the front and back middle areas of the forearm to shoulder.



LIVER & GALL BLADDER MERIDIANS

Sit up from the previous pose and open your legs in front of you at an angle with your legs straight. (Keeping your spine straight is more important than absolutely straight legs), Clasp your hands behind your head and bend to one side. Keep your chest open towards the ceiling. Open your hands & stretch your arms out in the direction of the bend. Keep your upper arm parallel to the floor if possible & your nose pointing straight forward or towards the ceiling. Return to your starting position and repeat the stretch to the other side. Give yourself one more stretch by reaching out in front and placing your hands on the floor.

Channels are along the middle and outside of the lower body, thighs, legs to the ankles.

