

Abdominal Massage

The abdomen or Hara in Japanese, is the core of the entire body, massaging it massages the Root of all the rest. If the root of a plant is healthy, the leaves and branches will flourish. Although abdominal self-massage appears simple, it is based on profound theory. For those interested in reading more about the Hara and its importance in Oriental Medicine, please read “**Hara Diagnosis: Reflections on the Sea**” by Matsumoto and Birch. Ten of the twelve Organs of traditional Oriental medicine are located in and can be accessed through massage of the Hara. The meridians connected to four of the most important Organs: the Kidney, Spleen, Stomach and Liver traverse the soft abdomen and are directly affected by this abdominal massage. Follow these simple steps daily for wonderful benefits!

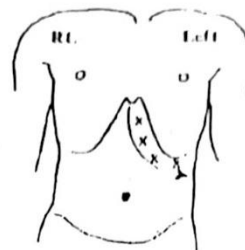
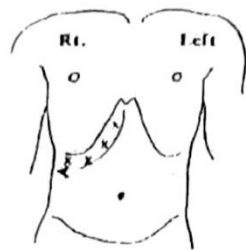
1. Begin by lying down comfortably in a quiet room. Pull the knees up and let them rest against each other. Breathe slowly and deeply. Using both hands, begin to press from the sternum (chest bone) above the right side, along the edge of the ribs.
2. Next, place your hands on your lower right abdomen next to the pelvic bone. With each exhalation, press down for a count of six. Inhale, and move **up** the abdomen until finally your hands are beneath the ribs again. Make three passes up the abdomen on the right side. Anatomically, this follows the course of the ascending colon.
3. Then, beginning at the solar plexus, press **down** the midline to just above the pubic bone. Make three other lines **down** the left abdomen moving from the center out to the sides. These passes down the left abdomen follow the course of the descending colon. Repeat this entire sequence up the right and down the left sides of the abdomen three times, each time exerting a little more pressure.
4. Next, go back to any places where you felt special pain or resistance. Exhale, exert pressure on these spots to the limits of your tolerance but without torturing oneself. The same spots or areas will be sore day after day. As you do this abdominal self-massage day by day, these areas will tend to become less sore and sensitive.
5. If you find an actual lump or mass in the abdomen, besides having this checked by a primary healthcare professional, do not press directly on the center of such a lump. Rather, search for a sore or sensitive spot on the edge or periphery of the mass. It is here that the pressure should be exerted.
6. Finally, return to the right area under the ribs (also known as hypochondrium) and again press once three times out to the right and then from the solar plexus once three times out to the left. This concludes your daily session of abdominal self-massage.

In Chinese medicine, the hypochondrium is the home of the Liver and Gallbladder. The Liver’s main function in Chinese medicine, is to govern smooth dispersal of the Qi and Blood. When the Liver’s digestion is good, one’s mood will be even and light and one will have regular emotions and freedom from depression. Therefore, one can see that just this first Hara Shiatsu move, promoting the free flow of the Liver and Gallbladder Qi, can have deeply healing effect.

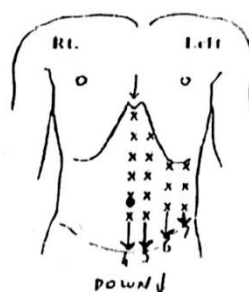
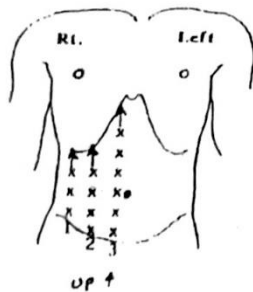
At first, you may experience discomfort, resistance or tension when pressing in under the ribs. This is common, but is also a sign of hypochondrial congestion, mostly in the Liver and Gallbladder. As you continue the massage over a period of weeks, any pain and tension will disappear and your fingers will sink deeper under the ribs.

After two to four weeks of daily practice, the average person will find their abdomen has become painless and supple. This should be accompanied by better bowel movements, better appetite, and therefore better, more abundant energy. This entire procedure takes approximately 20 minutes. It can be performed upon arising or before bed. After the abdomen becomes pain free and normalized, you can do the massage every other day or every few days. However, if you do not take care of yourself, after some time, discomfort, lumps and tension will return and these are signs that one's imbalance has also re-established itself. This is quite important and has to do with the true meaning of being a hypochondriac!

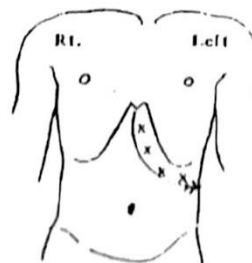
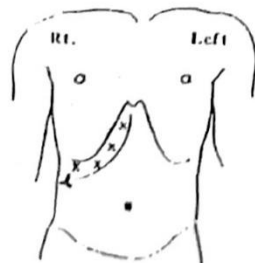
In traditional Japanese medicine, it is felt that sensitive spots, lumps, and tension in the abdomen are precursors to possibly more serious disease. A person may otherwise be symptom free, but to many Japanese physicians, if there is some abnormality in the Hara as diagnosed by palpation, there is some incipient disease process taking shape. Therefore, if one eliminates these abnormalities, one can abort such disease processes even before other signs and symptoms arise!



Repeat 3 times



Repeat 3 times



Repeat 3 times

(Adapted from Bob Flaws "Nine Ounces")