

Excursions in Iron Palm

Josh Walker

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In

Iron Palm

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Foreword

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FOREWORD

I first came to know about the Iron Palm through a book my stepmother brought home for me when I was about 12 years old. It was a small paperbound book of perhaps 100 pages which told the life story of several martial arts greats. I still remember my fascination whenever I got to the section about the legendary Ku Yu Cheung; the now famous picture of him breaking the stack of blocks seemed magical.

Of course the explanation given in the book was something about him harnessing his internal Qi to break the blocks. A bit confused and a bit hopeful, I asked my martial arts instructor about the subject, and I was fortunate enough to get a legitimate, though simplistic answer: The breaking feats are possible because of a conditioning method called Iron Palm, which is a process of gradually building up the hands, aided by the use of healing herbal liniments. Instantly, I was hooked.

Sixteen years and hundreds of concrete blocks later, I still have that same child like passion for Iron Palm. And yet, even today there are people being given no better explanation for what Iron Palm *is* than what I got from that children's book. I was fortunate enough to get a real explanation of how and why Iron Palm works. Many people, even today, are not so lucky. They are still being made to believe fairy tale versions of the truth, and suffering poor or no results in their training because of it. So for years now--centuries maybe--the question has remained: *What IS Iron Palm? How does it work?* I am pleased to say that within this book, the novice will find these burning questions answered, and the adept will find that many of their questions are answered too, often beyond what they were even clever enough to ask. The author has become a great friend of mine, and has illuminated this subject with a straightforward and detailed clarity that has been lacking until now. May the light of truth be ever shining for those who seek it!

Nathan Daniel Mangile

DISCLAIMER

It is important to note, as the author of this book, that I am not a Doctor of any type, nor am I a physical therapist, acupuncturist, or any other type of licensed medical or healthcare professional, Chinese or Western. Nothing in this book is meant to diagnose, treat, cure, prevent, or mitigate any disease, illness, or ailment. We cannot and do not provide any form of medical advice here or anywhere else and provide this book for informational purposes only.

Please consult your local medical practitioner with any questions or concerns you have and before engaging in use of any of the herbal formulas or training methods mentioned in this book. Josh Walker and any other individuals and references mentioned herein cannot be held responsible for the use or misuse of any of the herbal formulas or training methods discussed.

Throughout this book, you will also notice the use of the word “pathology”. It should be clearly noted that in no way is the intention of this book to offer any type of modern scientific study of any type of disease. The word “pathology” should be taken here in the context of a traditional view of the ways that iron palm training can stress the body, and *not* a scientific review or biomedical investigation of disease phenomena. Please understand that the phrase “Pathology of Iron Palm” is only a term and in the context of this book implies no scientific or medical research or study.

Excursions

In

Iron Palm

WHAT THIS BOOK IS AND HOW TO USE IT

Initially, the idea for this book came from talks with an acupuncturist that I worked with closely for a couple of years. The idea was to provide a detailed explanation (more as an article than a book) which explained all of the various pathologies that could develop from a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) perspective. The idea was that liniments and internal herbal supplements in present day may be lacking to some degree. Thus, they could be either created or modified to reflect a more optimal solution, based on the pathologies that were present in training, such as Iron Palm that was taxing to the body in a very specific way.

As analysis and development were completed and initial writing began, it became clear that there were numerous gaps in the public knowledge base about topics related to Iron Palm training, and this was worrisome; not just about the pathologies and the herbal formulas, but on a more rampant scale. While many Iron Palm practitioners were performing their training and succeeded at producing great power, it became clear that the herbal formulas as well as the training routines could be modified, added to, and even subtracted from, with the effect of creating much more useful and optimal training and producing quicker results in a safe environment. For example, details have never, (that I could find), surfaced in regard to exact densities and hardness quotients of training materials, analysis on short-term pathologies as it affects the organs, acupuncture treatments designed for Iron Palm training, or how to vary training structure in an effort to spur maximum benefit from the time investment. If this type of information existed, it was being held back to very small closed door circles. I felt that it was time for a change.

With writing on the pathology and the formulas complete, I sat down with some close colleagues and identified a number of topics in Iron Palm and conditioning that are, in general, either very rarely discussed or don't seem to be addressed at all. This book is the result. It is much more than just a simple primer article on

Five Element pathologies for Iron Palm training; it is an important supplement for the Iron Palm student, the Iron Palm practitioner, *and* the Iron Palm instructor! It is a resource that allows you to become a well-rounded and informed Iron Palm practitioner. Hopefully, it is the answer to all of your questions that have been sidelined by teachers in your past who simply wanted to withhold the entire truth, or didn't have them at all.

As you flip through these pages, you will find that I don't present an actual training regimen for the completely uninitiated student. You as the reader must seek out your initial training, whether it is through your teacher or through a third party such as PlumDragon. Myself and many others can provide the full Iron Palm training program to those who have never learned it if it is not available in your area.

Once you understand the basic Iron Palm routine and are in the midst of training, this book will become a vastly valuable reference work which should answer just about any question you might have that doesn't seem to be readily available. Everything that is not generally covered in most programs is here, from internal and external herbal formulas to theory and analysis; from Qigong routines to details about various breaking materials and conditioning materials; from dealing with plateaus to increasing your conditioning difficulty, and of course, the pathological analysis. It's all here. Find your answers here. Often times, material is presented from two separate points of view. Choose the one you prefer and discard the other.

When you use this book, consider that many martial artists have a great interest in Iron Palm and other conditioning but have less than a passing knowledge of the herbs and their associated compounds, nor the applications or situations under which Iron Palm becomes effective. Understanding the function of each of the herbs and why it is important in Iron Palm as well as for injury, (from Iron Palm or not), is very important. As an example, consider a professional guitarist. While this individual cares most about writing and playing music, he should also have at least a rudimentary understanding of the characteristics of different woods and woodworking skills, an understanding of the properties of the metals that guitar strings are made from and the process which creates them, and perhaps even a general history and evolution of the guitar. Just as this will help round out a well-studied guitarist, the Iron Palmist should understand, at least to some degree, what properties of Iron Palm jows and injury jows are important, why certain materials are chosen to condition with over others, and identifying pathologies that may lead to bodily damage and taking action to stop the damage.

So enters this book. Use this book to become the metaphorical "well-studied guitarist" of Iron Palm world. Use it to increase your awareness of important

topics that concern the Iron Palmist. Use it as a reference for you and your students. Keep it handy and get good use out of it. Let it show its use by allowing its pages to become tarnished with the aroma and resins of your jow-stained hands!

FUNDAMENTAL PARADIGMS OF IRON PALM

Conditioning programs of one type or another exist in all martial arts, sports, strength training, cardiovascular fitness, and other realms of personal, physical, and mental development. Generally, conditioning refers to the concept that a desired response or result can be produced, trained, or modified, based on some external stimulus. In other words, conditioning is the process of bodily adaptation to optimally perform a task. In strength training, the muscles adapt by increasing fiber size and also becoming more effective in a neuromuscular sense. Calcium deposits increase bone size, density, and tensile strength, while tendons and ligaments become thicker. In academic fields, the brain adapts in a powerful way through various learning modes, such as memorization and problem solving. In this case, physical neural changes alter the actual structure of the brain to produce increased mental acuity. This works psychologically as well, Pavlov's Dog being the most famous example. The idea of adaptation can be applied and seen in essentially any realm of study; mentally, physically, emotionally, and psychologically. This is the holistic approach. In fact, one may look at life as one massive conditioning session—the more you put in, the more you get out!

In sports science, conditioning is often in the form of calisthenics and cardiovascular drills or other specific and non-specific physically demanding activities. The goal being to “condition” parts of the body, such as the cardiovascular system, neuromuscular system, the reflexes, etc. for physical exertion relating to the activity at hand, whether it be power, endurance, speed, explosiveness, or any other number of attributes. As stress is placed on the cardiovascular system, the heart begins to adapt by becoming more efficient at pumping Blood. The heart actually grows physically larger and stronger, stroke volume increases, higher oxygen intake volumes are produced, and thus Blood is further enriched via the lungs. More oxygenated Blood is then pumped to muscles, which in turn expend greater amounts of energy. Mitochondria concurrently become more efficient at extracting this oxygen from Blood and

using it to produce utilizable energy in the form of ATP. All these complex processes, and many more, allow a progressively conditioned athlete to perform a desired response harder, longer, and with better technique than a non-conditioned athlete.

In martial arts, the process of cardiovascular conditioning and neuromuscular conditioning are both important, but so is that of conditioning parts of the body for impact. Whether it be the devastatingly hardened shin of the Muay Thai round kick, Makiwara training in Japanese arts, striking the heavy bag in Western Boxing, limb knocking, Iron Palm or iron body training in Chinese systems, or simply adapting the underlying fascia and other structures to stress by simply “sparring.” Most every martial art uses some method of conditioning which seeks to physiologically enhance the body in a way that allows it to optimally diminish the effects of an impact on the striker, and amplify the effects of impact felt by the opponent. That is, the goal is to increase power output while concurrently increasing the ability of bone and tissue to handle that additional power output. Iron Palm, iron sand palm, red/black sand palm, iron hand, vibrating palm, burning palm, cotton palm, and various other names refer to some of the terms given to Iron Palm systems; a specialized Chinese creation that has been practiced and refined for hundreds of years.

The scope of this book relates directly to the discussion of this type of conditioning, specifically to Iron Palm systems and the stress they place on the body from a Chinese Medicine and herbal perspective, as well as from a western sports science and physiological perspective. However, those involved in other conditioning programs, ranging from modern Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) backgrounds to traditional Tai Chi Chuan, should find a great deal of useful information within these pages. These theories and useful concepts, effective herbal formulas and acupuncture treatments, and additional simple exercises and methods, (both traditional and modern), can be performed to keep a martial artist or athlete from suffering from adverse effects through their training. This can also be useful for advanced practitioners who are worried about reaching a plateau in their training.



Performing Iron Palm conditioning outside on a sunny spring day

In recent years, the Iron Palm training regimen, unique to Chinese Martial Arts, has begun to experience a revival of sorts. Fortunately, this once esoteric form of practice has spread beyond the doors of inner discipleship and can be freely practiced by anyone who has the desire and willingness to put forth the effort necessary. This is no trivial task. What is unfortunate is that there is a great deal of misinformation that has been disseminated; bits and pieces strewn across the internet, individuals teaching with questionable skill sets, or incomplete cryptic writings in books, on websites, or message forums. Having only a portion of the picture can lead to dangerous practices that result in short-term and long-term damage to the body.

While you will not learn any specific or complete Iron Palm program in this book, it is our hope that the information within becomes valuable supplemental material, or fills in some missing pieces for those who train in Iron Palm or have more than a passing interest in this serious form of conditioning. Through reading this book, you should be able to glean the following:

- Gain a new or different understanding of the art and underlying processes at work inside the body.
- Learn about new internal and external herbal formulas to aid in your success.

- Touch up on other helpful modalities specifically designed for Iron Palm, such as acupuncture and Qigong, as well as training ideas from sports science and conditioning concepts.
- Learn to make the most efficient use of your program by creating or supplementing with more challenging and optimal training methods.

For those looking for a teacher or additional training or information, please contact PlumDragon Herbs at www.PlumDragonHerbs.com with your questions. While this book is not a specific training regimen for new Iron Palm students, I offer this training to anyone interested. The Iron Lotus Society also sells an Iron Palm DVD for those who have an interest in video material.

Iron Palm training can be used to supplement just about anyone's martial arts program. Being well educated on the facts and using a safely and sanely devised approach to an Iron Palm training program, one can realize a significant increase in power development and hand "toughness" and learn to produce what training partners might consider a much more painful strike. There are two primary important reasons why Iron Palm training can yield surprising results when trained correctly and diligently:

Conditioning through Repetition: The advantage that comes with the repetition of the power production sets within Iron Palm training is a specific development of refined whole body power. After performing hundreds of thousands of strikes, an individual who practices the power generation methods properly will have developed a type of whipping power; a unity of movement in their strikes that begins in the legs and ends at the hands. The body will have learned to optimize neuromuscular coordination for maximum power development, just as a football quarterback can increase throwing distance over the years. This is where the true striking power of this type of conditioning originates.

Conditioning of Bone, Tendon, and Tissue: German anatomist Julius Wolff developed what is now called Wolff's Law. This law describes that bones which are placed under stress will adapt to this stress by an increase in bone size and density, commensurate with the specifics of the activity. Just as weight lifters realize an increase in longitudinal (tensile) bone strength as they increase their weight bearing load, Iron Palm training banks on Wolff's law to realize an increase of bone density in the hand and surrounding regions, as well as a toughening of sinew and other surrounding tissues. This increase in bone density and the tissues' tolerance for abuse, allows a striker to punch harder without risk of fracture or other injury. The overall result: the hands become more difficult to damage and more capable of damaging softer objects. It is now up to the task of dealing with the stress of additional power output.

Coincidentally, some may also argue that the increase in bone density contributes directly to the impact power of the punch because there is more hardened mass in the hand. While increased density may make the hand feel harder to the person on the receiving end, my belief is that the statement, “a small increase in mass makes a big difference in striking power,” is a statement which lacks any real measurable validity. In my opinion, the increase in bone mass is certainly useful as a second order effect, but primarily for mitigating injury. Punching power increases from repetition of specific power generation exercises. While bone density may have a small effect on how “hard” a fist strike feels to an opponent, it is an insignificant factor in the overall development of force. This is produced solely by body connection learned through proper movement.

Basic Iron Palm Methodologies

Iron Palm programs exist in a number of varying methods from a number of varying schools and systems of martial arts. Some schools of thought begin with striking soft mediums such as rice and progressively move onto to harder mediums over time. Others begin on metallic bearings –such as iron, steel, or lead shot– and increase intensity and duration very slowly. Some schools prescribe to ultimate relaxation while others feel that tension is in order. Various regimens hit the Iron Palm bag in different ways, with different types of strikes, different orientations, or different intent. While there exists a vast many schools of thought, it is important to realize that there is no single inherently correct way to train Iron Palm. A lot of people train Iron Palm in significantly different ways and many of them ultimately gain positive results. Iron Palm and hand conditioning in general has evolved a great deal over the years and through a large cross-section of systems and regions. There are as many arguments about what Iron Palm *is* as there are arguments about whether this person or another has the Iron Palm skill. Arguments like this are futile; the proof is in the results. Iron Palm is ultimately just a phrase.

Basic Iron Palm Striking

For those not particularly aware of Iron Palm training, Iron Palm programs are generally trained by placing a filled canvas bag on a sturdy surface about navel height, and striking the bag a designated number of times; perhaps only 10-20 repetitions per strike at the initial onslaught of training and ranging up to hundreds of repetitions per strike, depending on the school of thought and the medium being struck. Many schools have begun to follow a somewhat standardized pattern of starting with beans as the training medium, then moving

on to gravel or river rock as an intermediate stage. Finally, the gravel is replaced with steel shot, iron shot, or lead shot, and the bag replaced with one that has an internal liner to keep dust from these metals contained and not become airborne.

Some schools also hit the medium directly rather than placing it into a canvas bag, which is often referred to as direct training. A common misnomer is that this is considered “external” training –a type of training usually focused more on thrusting– which works more on the toughness of the skin. With direct training, the progression of the materials being struck has been used in a similar way, beginning with either beans or rice, then progressing to gravel or river rock. However, in the final medium one would not want to use lead shot due to its toxicity. In this final material, steel shot is used by some, but the use of large-sized iron shot also called Taconite or iron ore, is a traditionally accepted material as well.

Some practitioners claim that direct training produces quicker results, and training directly does come with its own interesting progression and feel. As an example, the skin and pad on the back of the hand can be aggressively built up very quickly from direct training. A matter of months can produce changes in tissues that might take much longer on a canvas bag.

However, this does not mean you have developed Iron Palm. Remember, it’s all about power generation. Therefore, I caution the reader that directly hitting any type of metal may easily cause physical injury or health problems and it is always best to err on the side of caution. For safety and health, I never recommend that you work on open medium. The high levels of dust that become airborne with this method and the mess it produces on the hands is of questionable safety and is very high-maintenance. Always use a well-made, vinyl-lined canvas bag.

For conditioning purposes, the hand can be struck in a multitude of ways that vary from one program to another. Most systems incorporate at least these four strikes:

- Palm, often referred to as the heart of the palm, this may or may not include contact with the length of the fingers, depending on the system of study
- Back of the hand
- Knife edge or sometimes a hammer fist
- Palm heel

Some systems discard with the hammer fist, others with the palm heel. Regardless, these four strikes show up commonly and some systems add strikes to include the fingertips, tiger claw strike, finger raking, knuckles/fist (which I

recommend against), elbows, phoenix eye fist (using the second knuckle on the index finger), ginger and leopard fists, inner and outer forearm strikes, and potentially other creative ways of striking from other “esoteric” forms of fighting. Keep in mind, however, that if you add more types of strikes to your regimen that condition new surfaces, as the number of surface areas being conditioning increases, it will generally lead to a slower progression of hardening of all these surfaces, due to the additional strain on bodily resources being spilt up over more area.

Some systems will also hit with the fingers curled upwards so as to not hit the fingers on the bag, (or concrete when breaking), while other systems hit with the entire hand flat, so that fingers make contact. These are all kinesthetic differences that one should be aware of when taking up an Iron Palm training program. Be familiar with the methodology and concepts of the program you practice and take the time to feel out the hows and whys. While the ideas and paradigms in Iron Palm are not difficult to grasp, you can’t go wrong by educating yourself on the intricate details.

In certain terms, flexing the hand such that the fingers rise up and do not make contact with the bag is done by some individuals in an effort to protect the softer and smaller bones of the hand. However, the drawback here is that flexion of the muscles on the back of the hand may make it more difficult to fully express the power being applied; it might tend to get “stuck up” in the hand, as opposed to a more relaxed hit which will allow the force to move more freely into the material being struck. Therefore, development of this method tends to take a little more time.

While acquainting the reader with an exact Iron Palm program they can follow is beyond the scope of this work, I encourage readers of any and all levels to examine the program they use. Make a list of the types of strikes you utilize, how many you perform, and details about the motions and mediums. How does your system test progression in power production? Does your system discriminate between the movement used in conditioning and the conditioning used in striking? Is the strike linear or does it use a whipping type of motion? Be well aware of how your program fosters progression and understand why it is developed in the way that it is. Taking a step back and introspectively looking at your training is helpful regardless what level you are at or what system you train.

Fundamental Herbal Components of Iron Palm

Dit Da Jow, (or as I will call it, “Iron Palm Jow”), that is specifically formulated for Iron Palm training must generally be used before and after this type of

training. With some programs, it is also applied on and off during the course of a training session and is one of the more important items in helping you increase your skills while maintaining hand health. Iron Palm Jow will keep your hands pain-free and damage-free so that you can return to training as scheduled without worrying about injury.

Iron Palm Jow should focus somewhat less on the healing of injury than a more usual injury Dit Da Jow, and more on the *prevention* of injury and the building of the hand. Iron Palm liniments may have additional functions at varying strengths suitable for a given stage of training, but at a minimum should include a battery of herbs that perform the following functions:

- Unblocking and opening the channels, (Hai Tong Pi is one common herb that satisfies this function).
- Healing/strengthening bone and sinew, (Xu Duan is one common herb that satisfies this function).
- Increasing circulation in the hand, (moving herbs, usually called Blood invigorators, such as Chuan Xiong can satisfy this function).
- Healing any injury that takes place during training, (Ru Xiang and Mo Yao are common resins used to relieve pain and heal injury. Herbs in this and the Blood invigorating category show up in injury Dit Da Jow more commonly than the first two categories. Some herbs, such as Xue Jie can be useful for aiding the body in generating new flesh and tissue).



Chuan Xiong (Ligusticum) is a well-known Blood invigorator

Iron Palm liniments can also include herbs with other more secondary functions. Some secondary functions of such herbs include those which:

- Are commonly seen in clinical settings which help to fight arthritis and rheumatism. This is increasingly more important over the long term.
- Relax the sinews.
- Work to smooth and regulate circulation in the body.
- Increase production of heat (usually used prior to training).
- Clear Heat and inflammation (usually used following training).
- Work to support the function of various organ meridians in the body.
- Produce a specific olfactory aroma.
- Direct the function of the formula upward and outward to the extremities.

As a last action, (in the antiquated days of training), some practitioners of Iron Palm striking mediums such as lead shot –either directly or indirectly– included heavy resins in their liniment to seal off their hands from the toxic effects of these heavy metals. The Chan Ning Tong Iron Palm formula is one such formula that is heavy in resins with one goal of its herbal components to close off the pores from the potential of lead poisoning. In modern day, however, this is unnecessary. With many non-toxic mediums to work with directly and canvas-lined bags to safely pack lead into, we have evolved beyond the need for this sort of idiosyncrasy. Coincidentally, resins can make for a more lubricating and easier to use liniment, but they can also take longer to dry and become more messy and sticky after training is done. Additionally, Chan Ning Tong and other similar recipes work quite well as they are, so they continue to be used in this fashion without modification, perhaps so we can hold on to a snippet of the past.

Fortunately, Iron Palm liniments made in this way still work quite well for striking of different mediums. Thus, modification is generally not necessary because the herbs used which seal the hands are also beneficial for other reasons as well. In fact, removing these herbs could become a potential hindrance on the formula.

Internally administered herbal “training wines” or tonics are also often used to compliment and/or supplement the training. Liniments heal and build from the outside-in, while internal tonics or elixirs heal and build from the inside-out. These will be addressed in greater detail later on.

A complete Iron Palm program should also take diet into consideration, in addition to the internal herbal supplementation and, to some extent, lifestyle. It is with this complete, holistic view that one can optimize the results of their training routine and realize their goals in good time. All of these elements will be discussed in more detail as we progress through the sections of this book, and they will be all tied in with their individual importance as they relate to the Pathology of Iron Palm.

THE PATHOLOGY OF IRON PALM

Pathology, in a broad sense, deals with the branch of medical science that studies diseases and the nature of their origin, development, and cause as it manifests within a living being. Specifically speaking, pathology is of large importance to the Western medical field because at the microscopic level, there are perhaps millions of various types of diseases which are due to various disorders, virus, bacteria, etc. that can be identified and isolated in a laboratory setting. Once these things are identified and isolated, Western Medicine develops a vector for treatment of the problem. However, within the scope of this book and Chinese Herbalism, we concern ourselves not with disease in the microscopic world, but take a more macroscopic and holistic perspective on the nature of the body and its overall imbalance. To differentiate from the working definition of Western disease, this simply means some type of imbalance in the body; that is, when we discuss pathology here, we refer simply to a deviation from normal bodily operation that can take place through Iron Palm training. These are not “symptoms” so much as they are imbalances or “patterns” of the body deviating from its proper function. As such, we are not attempting to treat any kind of disease; rather, the goal is to define how Iron Palm can tax the body and what we can do to counteract that.

Iron Palm training, (and conditioning in general), can be fairly demanding on the body and takes its toll on an individuals ability to heal, strengthen, and maintain. “The pathology of Iron Palm” refers to the physiological stress that the body deals with while actively engaged in conditioning, and therefore examines the areas where weakness and imbalance can and are most likely to occur. In this text, the analysis is performed using Traditional Chinese Medicine and includes a Five Element analysis for rationale and explanation. The reader will get more out of this analysis after reaching a basic understanding of Five Element theory. However, I have provided enough information in the analysis so that one who knows very little or nothing about this system of analysis should be able to

follow along with little difficulty. For a list of recommended texts that cover Five Element theory with the TCM construct, please see Appendix II.

Ultimately, if we can determine in what manners Iron Palm stresses our being, we can work to counteract or offset those imbalances to get the most out of our training and, perhaps most importantly, maintain and/or increase the health of our hands and our longevity in the martial arts.

Within the analysis of pathology in Iron Palm training, it is important to address all areas of the body for possible effects. These listed portions of a person are the focus of interest:

Bones: The hard impact of striking causes small micro-trauma to the bones and joints. These micro-traumas are most prominent at the site of impact and exponentially decrease from the center of impact. Overtraining does not allow the body to heal fully from this, which can in turn bring about weakness if training progresses too quickly for the health or constitution of a given individual.

Hand Tissues: The fascia of the hand, (and to some degree, the wrist and forearm), is composed of a mesh of sinew, muscular tissue, nerves, and a network of Blood vessels. All of these materials are subject to injury from impact. Similarly to bone, overtraining can cause injury and unnecessary strain to the sinews and tissues of the hand and arm. At its worst, (generally when performing very hard force strikes during breaking), nerves can be effected which can cause numbness, loss of sensation, and tingling that interferes with normal everyday use.

Energy: The continual healing process taking place due to Iron Palm training utilizes resources within the body to maintain, heal, and strengthen the structures being stressed from training. Over time this can be taxing and depleting to our overall energy levels. As with overtraining in other realms, one may find themselves feeling physically or emotionally fatigued if the body is pushed too hard, or healing rates may suffer.

Organ Meridian Function: While not as tangible as the physical structures previously mentioned, the non-physical organ meridians of Chinese Medicine should be performing their functions at an efficient level. This will be covered in tandem with the discussion of the physical structures and energy levels bulleted above.

Short-Term Pathology

There are several short-term physiological changes that occur when an individual begins this type of impact conditioning program. First, the body will begin to heal the trauma presented to the body as it would at any other time. Early on, training should be slow because the body will feel sensitive to strikes with respect to pain and bruising, which will be more likely to occur at the very beginning. Initial Iron Palm training is a bit of a shock to the body.

As days and weeks pass, bones and other structures of the hand will begin to adapt slowly to routine impact and a pattern of the healing process will emerge. This begins the process of strengthening the underlying structures of the hand. Bone will begin a long process of healing trauma and building itself up, both in density and size. Tissues will realize the beginning of a more durable nature, as small bruising crops up from sensitive tissue, (possibly from striking the bag incorrectly, with too much force, or too many repetitions). The body will slowly become more efficient at repairing tissue and increasing the durability of cell walls and Blood vessels.

Perhaps the more important physiological change is that central and peripheral nervous system activity will increase due to the stimulation of motor units that have not been directly trained like this in the past. As the brain learns and adapts to the “shock” of a new type of motion, it will learn to recruit the necessary motor units to best satisfy the task at hand. The initial first few weeks is often met with significant improvement and a feeling of comfortableness with the training. With only a few weeks of training, a clumsy looking, weak Iron Palm strike can show a great deal of improvement as the brain learns to optimize movement by recruiting the proper muscle groups and timing that make the strike more functional and more connected. This is where the true power from Iron Palm is derived. It can be argued that the hardening of the hand described before is only necessary in order to withstand the impact power that can be produced by training the nervous system to learn how to produce power. Power production comes from the refinement of motion and the utilization of whole body power through specific power production exercises. At this point, (from two to four weeks time), the body will have adapted to a constant program in the short-term and a leveling off to a more steady state of improvement will begin.

As the tapering off begins, most Iron Palm systems will add more strikes each week until a certain number is reached. This progressive increase of duration will help keep the body adapting on the short-term to a continuously increasing stress level. This should occur at a slow enough pace such that it can deal with the stress of conditioning without producing injury from overtraining.

From a Chinese medical perspective, these processes will become taxing on the Kidney, Liver, and to a degree, the Spleen meridians—these terms refer to the Chinese meaning of the organ systems and meridians and do not necessarily refer to the physical Western organs. The process will also consume some amount of energy reserves and nutritional resources in the healing process. This is part of why a healthy diet, good sleep habits, and effective internal and external herbal training formulas are often an important part of the growth process during Iron Palm training. Without them, injury can take place much more easily and training may move along at a very slow rate. These will be discussed later in the text.

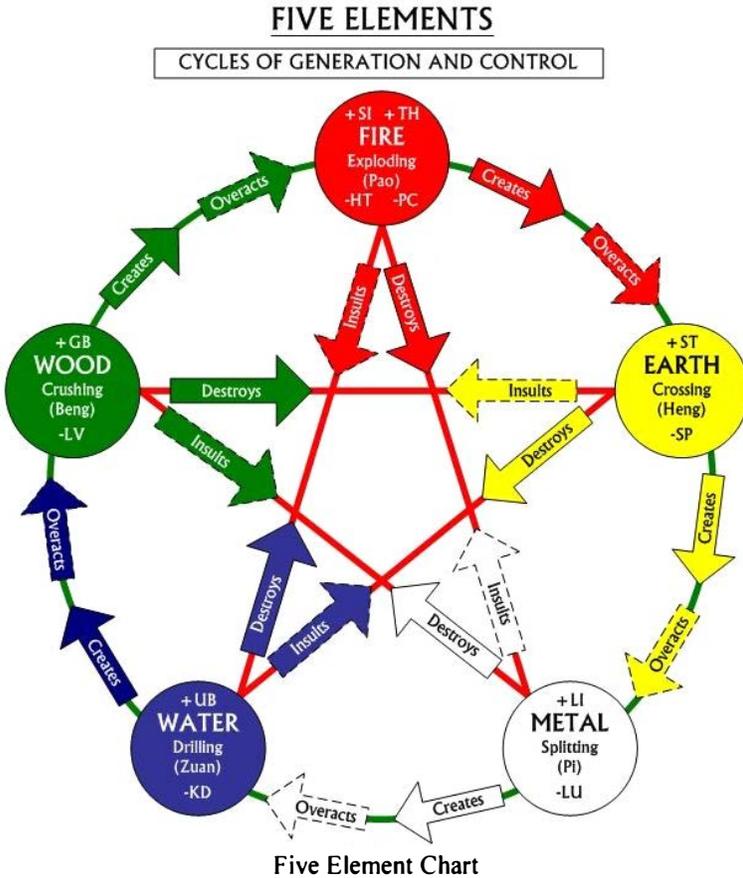
Long-Term Pathology

In the steady-state long-term, most Iron Palm routines do not vary the intensity and/or duration of training. Frequency and striking method are usually fairly constant over time. For example: once or twice per day, every day, and the four basic strikes mentioned earlier, no force, on a canvas bag filled with some kind of shot. For this reason, in the long term, the body will have adapted to its specific training environment; bone will have hardened to accept impact and tissues, such as skin, may no longer experience the degree of redness, inflammation, injury, or pain that may have once been pervasive during or after striking early on. Neuromuscular coordination to produce whole-body power will have been refined to some degree, and the learning curve will begin to plateau. At this point, the body has adapted and is no longer being pushed out of its comfort zone. Progress becomes slow and steady as the years tick by. Determination turns to patience as the driving force for training as profound results present themselves in much longer periods of time. Different people will acknowledge this at different intervals, (some perhaps after one year, and others after perhaps five years). Just as in strength training, the idea of “periodization” is of considerable importance in mixing up your routine. Be progressive to always maximize what you get out of your routine. Forcing a progression to a new level of duration, methodology, intensity, or harder striking medium will reset your body back into some of the more short-term physiological changes and help to spur increased evolution in your training. In other words, once you are comfortable, mix it up a bit and keep your body guessing! For ideas on how to accomplish this goal, please read our section on Training Periodicity.

Five Element Perspective

Some martial arts systems utilize a Five Element perspective to describe how to attack, how to heal, or any number of other views. Present below are Five Element theory diagrams as they are used by Dr Michael Neeley for clinical

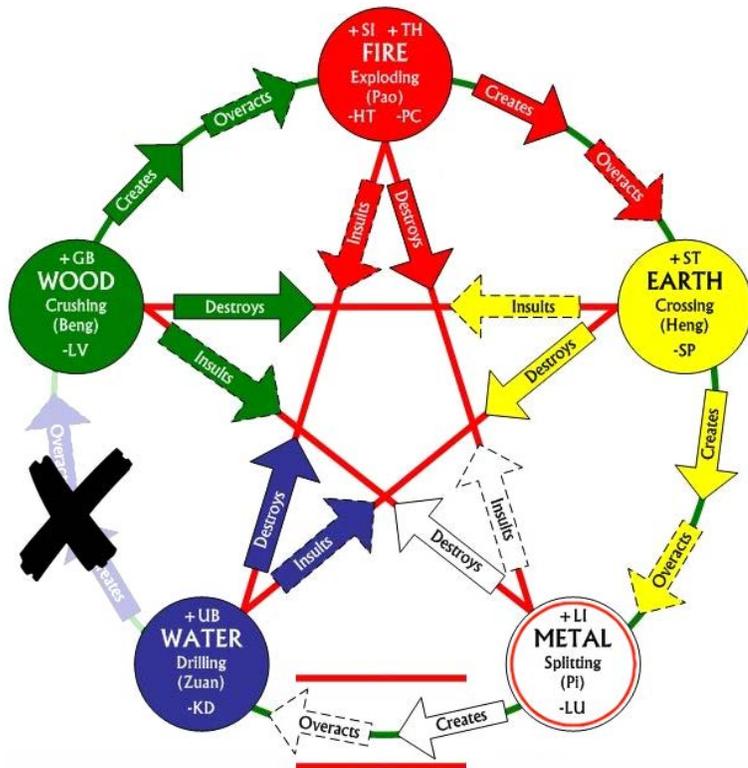
analysis using Chinese Medicine. While opinions on this perspective differ greatly, it is provided here in chart-form because I am unaware of it being used anywhere else in this way. It is therefore, an excursion in Iron Palm to discuss this new material and perspective.



With the basic idea of short-term and long-term physiological changes in place, we can proceed to cover some of the common disharmonies that may be created as a result. I will use the above Five Element diagram to discuss some of these pathologies, namely the Kidney and Spleen pathologies. While some of these examples and conditions may appear obvious in application, it can be enlightening to cover the details of these pathologies in the TCM paradigm so that we can build a framework for appropriately dealing with them through the use of herbs, acupuncture, Qigong, program modification, and other means. Conversely, one or two of these pathologies may seem strange or silly. And while these vague references are typically rare occurrences, they are also worth covering, simply to be thorough and provide the necessary understanding in the case that something “strange or silly” is ever encountered.

In Chinese medicine, the Kidney meridian is responsible for a number of very important activities. The link of Iron Palm to the kidney is primarily due to the old adage that, “the Kidney rules the bone.” Bone strength and the body’s ability to support bone health is a direct function of Kidney strength and health. The Kidney meridian system is also our “battery,” and is quite closely correlated with the body’s overall growth, development and storage of essence, (jing), maintenance of libido and the reproductive system, and health of the lower back and knees, (this shallowly covers most of the functions of the Kidney meridian, but not all). Overtaxing the Kidney meridian can inhibit the body’s ability to heal bones and joints, produce marrow and Blood, maintain libido and sexual functionality, maintain energy levels, and other jobs associated with this system of the body. Causing an injury, or repeated micro-trauma, to the bone directly undermines the “energy” of the Kidney meridian. With a weakened Kidney meridian from Iron Palm training, one may observe tightness or weakness at the joints of the hand, wrist, or elbow, arthritic symptoms, easily injured bone that is slow to heal, and potential issues with the reproductive system. This is a very important organ/meridian system in the body and likely the most taxed organ system through Iron Palm training. It is important to ensure that Kidney function, (again, the Chinese Kidney, not specifically the physical masses that Western medicine calls a Kidney), does not become deficient or overtaxed through overtraining.

FIVE ELEMENTS



Kidney Pathology in Five Element Form

The secondary system that may develop pathology is that of the Liver system. From a Chinese perspective, the pathology of Liver disharmony that we are concerned with in Iron Palm training comes about primarily due to its function to govern the sinews and maintain a smooth flow of Blood/Qi. The Liver meridian, sometimes referred to as the Great Regulator, is often the first source of “stagnation” in the body. This is sometimes referred to as “Internal Wind.” When stagnation exists in the Liver, the liver is unable to properly nourish the sinews and they cannot heal as quickly as they are being damaged. This can lead to tightness, stiffness, weakness, and also similar conditions of Wind-Damp that are somewhat associated with the arthritic effects noted previously. Additionally, stagnation in the Liver may cause tension, cramping, or spasm in the sinew. Decreased range of motion and chances of cramps and spasms may increase, as well as chance for injury. Soreness near the joints or muscles may also develop more easily than it should following training. In serious or rare cases, the lack of a smooth regulation in the Liver can also lead to stagnation elsewhere in the body and produce emotional instability, such as anger, irritability, or rage. This is certainly one less common and more extreme

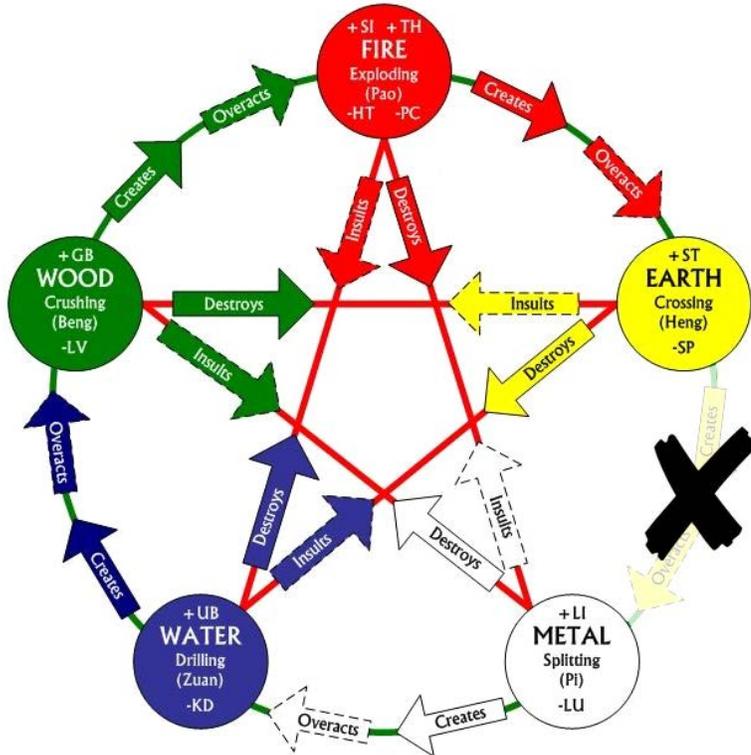
pathology, but nonetheless, it could develop if the pathology were given a chance to bury itself deep in the body through years of improper training.

While the Liver is primarily of interest because of its governance over the sinews, there exists another additional inadvertent pathology that can weaken the Liver and cause stagnation. Observing the Five Element chart, you can see that a general Kidney system deficiency, (such as repeated overtraining injury to the bones and joints), can indirectly undermine the operation of the Liver system, which may also lead to stagnation. This may also manifest as sinews that are weak or easily injured, tightness, spasms, tremors, cramping, etc. In other words, Liver meridian problems, (not the physical Liver but the more analytical meridian system), can develop directly due to an injury to the sinews, stagnation from diet, or Blood stasis from injury. Secondary Liver meridian problems can also develop inadvertently because of some type of deficiency in the Kidney, due to an actual injury to bone or a deeper chronic Kidney deficiency due to overtraining or some other reason. This is a good illustration of the complex and interrelated relationships that exist between various parts of the body. Problems with one function can have an indirect, milder “ripple effect” on other functions, so the need to view the body as a whole unit is important. You will see this ripple effect crop up again.

Lastly, a Spleen disharmony can be developed from Iron Palm training. The idea of the Chinese Spleen meridian, perhaps known more properly as the pancreas and other associated systems in Western Medicine, is in direct control of the muscles and limbs and helps keep Blood in the vessels. The Spleen system is also vitally important for the digestion of food and production of energy, (ATP, Qi, or whatever you wish to call it). If the Spleen meridian becomes weak or damaged from overtraining, the muscles and limbs will suffer and be slow to heal and develop, or may injure more easily than they should, causing additional time off from training. One may also begin to bruise more easily –perhaps the most obvious sign of overtraining– or feel soreness in the smaller fine motor muscles of the wrist, hands and forearms. This illustrates why a good diet is necessary as well.

The Spleen also shares close connections to the Kidney, Liver, and other organs. Malfunction of the Spleen can cause a number of patterns to develop, including a lack of energy production resulting in physical or mental fatigue and malaise, digestive problems, edema, and as noted above, an increased level of bruising or weakened musculature.

FIVE ELEMENTS



Spleen Pathology in Five Element Form

In a similar way that the Kidney can undermine the Liver and cause stagnation indirectly (the ripple effect), a weakness of the Spleen’s functionality can undermine the Lungs, again creating inadvertent deficiency. However, this is very unlikely to happen as a result from Iron Palm training because a Kidney deficiency may cause an over activity in the Lungs meridian. Essentially, the combination of these two pathologies, (Lung deficiency and Lung Excess), may have the effect of canceling each other out, and so it is not a pathology that one will likely develop due to Iron Palm training. Again, it is being mentioned in an effort to be thorough about theory.

There is an additional pathology that is important to discuss. This pathology is one of the root reasons why some systems of Iron Palm choose to only strike with their right hand and not their left.

The meridian point PC-8 (Pericardium 8) is fixated at the center of the left and right palm and is sometimes used in acupuncture treatment. It is in this point that people may feel a “pulse” at after training; the point that some practitioners imagine projecting their power from at the point of impact: the “laogong” point.

In past years, there have been many systems of martial arts that advocate performing Iron Palm training with only the right hand. The reasoning behind this is that some individuals feel that striking with the left hand will injure the Pericardium via the PC-8 point, causing heart flutters and other sensations in the chest. Indeed some practitioners that are alive today claim to have actually felt heart palpitations when training with the left hand. Therefore, some Iron Palm systems generally train only the right side. As a quick side note, there are logical reasons to train only one side. Either you train your power side so it can withstand maximum stress, or you train both hands so that you have equal power in the other if one is damaged. This is a common Shaolin idea. Additionally, some systems claim that progress seems to increase when you focus on one hand.

However, what seems to be overlooked by many is that the Pericardium 8 point exists in both the left *and* right palms. Training in Iron Palm will be stressful on the Pericardium 8 points regardless of which hand is used to strike. That is, if one trains solely with the right hand, the PC-8 point may still be adversely affected if training is not cautious, but rather reckless. However, the reason that people may not notice problems training on the right side is because theoretically, it is not as perceivable of an affect as that of training on the left.

In Chinese medicine theory, the left PC-8 point is considered Yin in nature. Damaging the Yin of the PC meridian will cause the Yang to be improperly balanced by the Yin, leading to the possibility of heart palpitations that one might be able to physically feel. Conversely, the PC-8 point on the right side of the hand is considered Yang in nature. When injury to this side occurs and Yang deficiency develops, the Yang cannot properly balance the Yin. The manifestation in this situation will be the potential slowing of the heart beat or a lack of mental responsiveness or receptiveness, as well as a possible feeling of fatigue from lack of oxygenated Blood flow. Overall, while damage can be developed from striking with *either* hand, damage is much easier to perceive when it occurs in the left hand. In the long-term, a deficiency of either Yin or Yang can cause a deficiency in the other. So regardless which hand you are hitting, you must make sure not to over train and to use sufficient internal and external herbal formulas which sufficiently protect the pericardium.

For this reason, while I personally feel that training carefully on both hands for symmetrical balance is best, I can only suggest that you follow the teachings of your mentor and take the aforementioned as a thorough theoretical understanding of the Pathology of Iron Palm. Additionally, because it is important to protect your body, (including both hands, especially when training both hands) as best as possible, I suggest using our comprehensive internal Iron Palm tonic to help strengthen and protect the body from all the pathologies that

have previously been discussed. This formula thoroughly addresses each of these pathologies and the tonic also includes the issuance of herbs specifically to help protect the PC-8 acupuncture point.

While the formula for the Comprehensive iron palm tonic is not given in this book, I will provide the list of ingredients to some other relevant internal and external herbal formulas in the next chapter. These formulas should be adequate for most iron palm training regimens.

COUNTERACTING THE PATHOLOGY OF IRON PALM

In any endeavor in life, there is generally a balance that we seek, searching for equilibrium, the place where events go steady-state. Eat more and then exercise more to compensate; stay up late and then sleep in to compensate. Or train harder and compensate by using the necessary tools for the specific training to heal and strengthen the body so that we do not fall prey to the pathologies of the activity.

In Iron Palm training, we are armed with several weapons for this task, including items as basic as a good diet and sleeping habits, and spanning out into complex herbal formulas for the hands and body.

Dietary Considerations

More than one school of thought exists as to how diet, herbal supplements, and lifestyle are structured when participating in Iron Palm training. With the pathology information presented earlier, it is no surprise that some schools of thought highly discourage sexual activity during the initial onslaught. This is due primarily to the additional stress it might place on the Kidney meridian system, (recall, the Kidney system is responsible for sexual and reproductive functions as well as the bone strength). This is of more concern early on when the initiation of Iron Palm training can “shock” the body and produce substantial stress.

Many Iron Palm programs prefer to administer dietary restrictions as well. Damp, cloying, deep fried foods and other greasy items, and alcohol usually top the list. Damp, heavy, greasy foods tend to bog up digestion and circulation, creating stagnation and blockage in the channels which produce bloating and undermine the Spleen meridian’s ability to regulate fluids and keep dampness at bay. Removing damp cloying foods from the diet is primarily adhered to so that

the body can maintain sound, even circulation and regulation so as to not adversely affect the Liver or Spleen meridians by placing undue stress on them. Additionally, removing such items as caffeine and other stimulants will help to preserve the body's energy, so that it may contribute all resources to the healing and strengthening aspects of training. Items such as coffee, alcohol, and refined sugar also have an energetically warming action on the body. Consuming too high a volume of these types of foods may build up excessive heat in the body. Be careful of your intake of these foods, especially during hard training and during the hot summer months when Heat and dryness are more likely to develop. Chances are the occasional fried meal or overindulgence in alcohol or caffeine will not cause a noticeable change in your training, but it is certainly best to limit these types of foods, not just for training but for your overall health. Additionally, a small glass of wine or shot of warm sake may actually aid in the healing and loosening of the body to some degree. Taken prior to, or following a nightly training session is a reasonable practice. Drinking a few beers every night is not.

The bottom line is that a healthy, balanced diet is important in any intense endeavor. Iron Palm regimens are no exception here. Simply put, Iron Palm requires a slightly different diet to support bone and tendon development than a long-distance runner, who needs a great deal of complex carbohydrates to provide much needed energy for the trek. Furthermore, it is best to realize that Iron Palm training is not a mystical or magical training regimen; it is conditioning and abides by the same physics, biology, and physiology as all other activities. It can, and *should* be safe, of reasonable intensity, and follow similar dietary guidelines as any other physical activity in which the body is pushed and in which significant adaptation takes place. The body requires nutrients to grow and we should always strive to give it what it needs to optimally perform these jobs. From this perspective, this includes a healthy diet, proper pharmaceutical-grade nutritional supplementation if necessary, and herbal formulas, which is a must for optimal health in anyone, whether in Iron Palm training or not.

Those involved in rigorous Iron Palm training are no doubt saying, "Okay, great. So what do I need to consume to make sure my body has what it needs?" While I cannot offer dietary recommendations, "meal plans," or recommend supplements, those who are looking for dietary trends may find it helpful to consume a diet which makes sure to address calcium intake for the health of bones and joints, as well as protein composed of all the essential amino acids to provide building blocks for muscle and tendon. If you are a vegetarian, combining several sources of amino acids, (such as rice and beans), will provide you with all the essential amino acids the body needs. Long Gu (an herb called "Dragon Bone" which is fossilized bone) has a calcium content in it if you prefer not to take calcium tablets. Additionally, any type of tendonous material

is a good addition to your cooking. This includes foods like freshly made chicken stock. Many countries in the East consume the bone and tendon of animals as well as the meat.

While there is some level of debate over items such as Glucosamine, I feel that it works well if used consistently. The incorporation of compounds such as CoEnzyme Q-10, (an energy molecule), and Vitamin B Complex can be very effective at increasing energy and stamina while training. In addition, there are foods and herbs which can help support the important organ meridians discussed in the prior section, namely the Kidney, Liver, and Spleen.

Salt is a substance that tends to direct the actions of herbs to the Kidney. So, one group of foods that is usually fantastic for the Kidneys is any type of food which is salty or comes from a salty environment. This includes any and all kinds of seaweed, many types of salt water fish like Salmon, miso soup, etc. Sea Horse (Hai Ma) is a Chinese herb which strongly fortifies the Kidney meridian and is sometimes made in rice Congee with Jujube dates. PlumDragon sells Hai Ma but it is an expensive herb that is not necessary for most individuals. Chicken stock is also partially good for the Kidney and also helps tonify the Spleen meridian. Additionally, many seeds support the functions of the Kidney meridian. One common nut in the marketplace is the walnut. Keep in mind that these foods should be eaten in moderation due to high oily fat content. You should not make a habit of eating large quantities of salt, Hai Ma, or oily nuts, but these can be helpful items to add to your weekly diet in small quantities if they are not already present. Raspberries can also support the Kidney, reduce inflammation, and aid in the generation of fluids. Other foods that help to strengthen bone and the Kidney meridian include soy beans, red grapes, oysters, plums, sweet potatoes, and yams. Additionally, meats like duck, pork, and lamb tend to hit the Kidneys. Duck is often cooked in the East with tonic herbs.

Foods that address the Liver meridian, Liver Blood, and stagnation in the Liver tend to be either mildly or very sour in flavor. Beets are an excellent Blood tonic and carrots are wonderful overall Liver tonics. Lemons, being sour, also help break up Liver Qi stagnation and return circulation to normal. Lemons also have a number of other great health benefits, (men take note: like aiding in the breakup of kidney stones), so add lemon to your water or flavor your green tea with lemon zest! Additionally, oysters, pine nuts, plums, raspberries, shiitake mushrooms, and white fish are good foods for the Liver. Some types of citrus peel are used as an herb to “regulate Qi.” While it may sound odd, some people simply eat the peel of fresh fruit rather than throw the peel away. This can aid in digestion and help with regulating circulation through the body. Steeping small amounts of lemon peel, orange peel, or grapefruit peel in your tea will help mildly infuse your tea with these functions. If you do this, make sure you use fruits that have not been sprayed with pesticides! Xiang Fu which is known as

nutgrass is an herb that contains a number of compounds that make it useful for regulating the Liver. Among the compounds within, it has limonene, which is also found in lemons.

The tonification of Qi, and more specifically the Spleen meridian and production of Qi at the Spleen, are generally brought on by sweeter and warmer foods. Perhaps the most well known food-grade Qi tonic is Honey, which is one of the most nutritious substances on the planet. Royal jelly is a good substance as well, produced by bees to nourish the queen bee. Because the Spleen is the Earth element, Chinese Medicine sees many “root” vegetables as good Spleen tonics. Tubers are roots that plants use to store large amounts of starches and carbohydrates to feed off of when the soil is devoid of what they need. Foods such as carrots and herbs like Shan Yao fit into this category as well. Most types of tuberous roots coming from the ground will in some way help to tonify the Spleen. Potatoes, yams, radishes, rutabagas, and carrots are all good examples. Not surprisingly, these types of vegetables and the like are high in starches and other carbohydrates which help to spur the production of energy and correspond, in a Western sense, to the primary fuel that our body uses for the production of ATP. For general Spleen tonification, whole grain rice, grains and good quality, non-processed wheat are also very important. Please note that some people may have allergy to wheat and gluten products. Please check with your dietician before adding wheat to your diet if it is not already present.

Fruits, (simple sugars), are often a good general Qi tonic and contain a number of vitamins, nutrients and simple carbohydrates that help support energy production as well. Citrus fruits will also aid the Spleen in circulating energy so that it does not become stagnant, and keeps the Spleen warm and dry. Any meats should be eaten in moderation. Red meat has more Blood tonifying capability, while fish from the ocean also addresses the Kidneys because of the salty environment. It is also lower in fat than many red meats and much of the fat that it does have are important oils that make it a fantastic staple to the diet of anyone who is putting a great deal of stress on the muscles and tendons of the body.

Many herbs and spices used for culinary purposes also have very relevant, even if mild, utility for training. As an example, basil is a mild Wind-Damp herb that helps to open the channels and increase Blood flow, while cinnamon bark warms the channels. The species that is used for cooking is drastically weaker than the herb-grade cinnamomum cassia, but can still be useful. Turmeric (Jiang Huang) is a fantastic herb that invigorates the Blood and also opens the channels. It also exhibits some anti-inflammatory function. Turmeric is also one of three ingredients that appears in Indian curry powder and is used for many Eastern culinary dishes. Increasing the frequency that these herbs are used in your cooking during the cooler months is a good practice.

Seasonal use of teas can aid with training as well. In muggy summer months, green tea, Oolong tea and other similar mixes can help cool and dry the body. A variety of mixes can be purchased commercially these days, which include loose and bagged tea leaves with mixes such as mango, pomegranate, go-ji berries (Gou Qi Zi), citrus, and other creative concoctions.

Fruits such as watermelon and pineapple have compounds that have been shown to effectively lower temperatures in the body and reduce some types of inflammation. Mint, peppermint, or spearmint can also reduce Heat and inflammation in the body. Spices such as cardamom can penetrate dampness and aid in digestion of some of the heavier tonics found in Iron Palm training wines.

In the winter months, it can be good practice to warm the body with warming herbs that warm and open the channels and raise the Yang. Below is a recipe for a special Chai tea that we make here at PlumDragon during the winter months to keep the joints warm. Students who visit us for weekend training provide significant positive feedback on this simple but effective tea recipe:

PlumDragon Chai Training Tea

Four parts Black Tea (Green or Oolong is okay, but is cooler. Pu Erh also works well and may aid in strengthening the Spleen)

Four parts Gui Zhi

Three parts Ding Xiang

One part Fang Feng

One part Huang Qi

One part Nutmeg (if you use ground nutmeg, just use a pinch)

Many Chai Tea recipes call for the bark of Cinnamon, or Rou Gui. In this recipe, we utilize Gui Zhi, which is not as warming, but has a slight moving capability to it and definitely tastes better in the tea.

Crush or grind the Gui Zhi, Ding Xiang, Fang Feng, Huang Qi and Nutmeg, and place in a small amount of water. This water should make up half of the volume of total tea. Bring to a near-boil, and then simmer for 10 minutes. Add an equal amount of milk and allow to re-simmer. Add Tea leaves and allow to steam for another five minutes. Strain off the herbs and add a small amount of vanilla and honey to taste.

This tea tastes wonderful and has an almost numbing property, making it great for sore throat due to cold invasion (note: *do not* use this tea for sore throat due to Heat conditions such as strep throat or flu). Adding Hong Hua to this recipe is

a good addition for many reasons, but it will disrupt the flavor of the tea. Try it both ways and decide which you like best. A pinch of pepper is common in commercial mixtures of Chai Tea, as are small helpings of Star Anise, citrus, and other spicy items. Lastly, a couple of pods of Bai Dou Kou have been helpful for some students who have been bogged down in the Heat by heavy tonics such as Spring Wine.

As you can see, diet is vitally important and can sometimes be difficult to sort out properly with as busy as life can get. Given an always tough economy, the rampant processing of foods, and other factors, we can't always spend the money we would like on better foods. Coincidentally, a lacking diet can be overcome in two separate ways: vitamin supplements and traditional internal herbal recipes. The first method is through the use of vitamin supplements to support your lifestyle. Given a good product, this can be a very effective way to vitalize the entire body as a whole.

If you wish to create an intake of vitamin supplements to support your lifestyle, you can take a free online health assessment to see what your body really needs. I recommend you visit Dr. Mike Neeley, OMD on the web at www.drnichaelneeley.usana.com, where you can obtain more information and simply order whatever you need. Dr. Neeley, his background, and interests are discussed in more detail at the end of this book for those that are interested.

The second method of making up for a lacking diet is through the supplementation of herbal training formulas for internal use. Most traditional Iron Palm programs have a battery of internal herbal formulas to compliment the external liniments. Traditional Iron Palm programs incorporate the use of internal herbal recipes to specifically support Iron Palm or other conditioning. These herbal recipes are either in the form of herbal patent pills, ground powders, teas, or training wines. They are sometimes publicly available as well-studied classical recipes and other times they may be proprietary formulations that exist solely in ones' lineage of martial arts. However, in these cases they are often based on a publicly available classical formula from some point in time. These herbal formulas can also be safely combined with a full-spectrum vitamin supplement such as those mentioned above. There are two very general categories that these types of herbal recipes fall into, namely clearing and tonifying.

Clear or Tonify: That is the Question

In most Western forms of medicine, the idea of flushing out the system is often discussed as a "detox." From fasting to colonics; antibiotics to sinus medicine,

detoxification is always big business in American society. However, while there exists a large focus on removing, stripping down, and purifying, the idea of adding, building up and strengthening is often left in the dark. Enter the “Tonic,” center stage...

There exists an important dipole-opposite philosophy within the Chinese herbal schema for using both internal and external herbal formulas: *One can either clear or tonify*. Clearing is the process of removing excess, promoting circulation, removing blockages and stagnation. It is more akin to the detoxification discussed before. Tonification relates to the process of building and strengthening, providing the body with the necessary nutrition and building blocks to build and fortify different parts/organs and functions of the body. While excess dampness is cleared using clearing herbs, deficient Qi would be tonified by strengthening Qi and strengthening the Spleen’s ability to produce and transport energy. Clearing herbs are often less dense than tonic herbs, lighter in color, more moving and drying, and may be very aromatic in nature. Clearing formulas tend to produce lighter looking liniments and decoctions. Tonifying herbs tend to be heavier and darker, warming to the body, more stagnating and dampening or “cloying.” Honey is a mild Qi tonic and a great example of the heavy dampness that is common of tonic herbs. In contrast to clearing recipes, tonics tend to produce darker, blacker, “meaner” looking formulations.

In the tonifying approach, the philosophy is to provide the practitioner a battery of well-balanced herbs that build and strengthen the Kidney meridian, Qi, Spleen, etc. The patent teapill Gecko Tonic, (or Ge Jie Da Bu Wan in pinyin), is sometimes used for this, and includes some strong tonic herbs to strengthen aspects of the Kidney and Liver in an effort to strengthen bone and sinew. Some herbs included in this formula are Ge Jie and the Xu Duan/Gu Sui Bu combination, which are two Yang tonics that help to heal and strengthen bone but also help to increase circulation. These two tonics are more moving than other tonic herbs and will not cause significant stagnation. Huang Jing, (a Yin tonic), and Du Zhong also help to provide nourishment to the body to help manufacture new bone and marrow. These herbs are not moving like Xu Duan or Gu Sui Bu and may be combined with regulating herbs to prevent cloying or stagnation. Gecko Tonic is a very reasonable adjunct to Iron Palm training, helping the body maintain the Kidney and Liver during conditioning that places extra stress on these organs. Gecko Tonic is also inexpensive and has an advantage that teas do not as they don’t often come with the disagreeable taste present with wines or decoctions. Some schools will take this tonic recipe in 1/6 of the daily dosage listed on the bottle for more long-term use. Please consult with your teacher, herbalist, and healthcare professional to determine the correct dosage for you and your training.



Spring Wine Tonic: A very strong tonifying formula

In contrast to tonification, a more clearing route may be to utilize something like the Great Mender Dit Da Wan, known classically as Jin Gu Die Shang Wan and translates as “Tendon Bone Fall Strike Pill.” Great Mender focuses more on a vitalizing/invigorating approach that seeks to remove stagnation and heal injury that may be too deep for an external liniment to treat optimally by itself. Great Mender has some potent herbs that work to break Blood and Qi stasis, clear blockages and heal injury. It is a moving formula that invigorates the Blood to heal injury and maintain good circulation. Great Mender is also taken in smaller doses than what is stated on the bottle for Iron Palm use. Daily dosages of approximately 20-25% of that stated on the bottle are not uncommon. Coincidentally, because Gecko Tonic and Great Mender are good adjuncts for Iron Palm and have similar functions but work in different ways; some people have found that they complement each other well when paired together. Because they are inexpensive, cleanly produced, and easy to obtain, going this route is certainly not difficult. The only drawback is that teapills are generally less potent than a decoction or training wine produced from whole herbs. Again, it is important that you consult with your Iron Palm mentor or local herbalist to determine what the best route is for you.



Flexibility Pack: A formula that is mildly clearing and opening in its action

While Gecko Tonic and Great Mender are fairly large formulas, these types of recipes need not be wildly complex and usually include the almost ubiquitous combinations such as Dang Gui and Chuan Xiong, Mo Yao and Ru Xiang, and a couple other herbs that vitalize the Blood and spur the healing process.

For those who are unsure about which formula is best, it may be important to consider how your body is usually affected by your normal training routine. If the more common problem is that you bruise easily or are injured a lot, experience noticeable stasis following training sessions, aches and pain in the joints, or puffiness in the hand, you are likely best off with Great Mender or a similar clearing formula. If, however, you feel like your body has a difficult time healing fast enough, that the bones or joints feel weak, (as opposed to painful), or you experience feelings of low energy, fatigue or lethargy, a Gecko Tonic adjunct or a similar formula may be more suitable.

Coincidentally, in this type of practice it is perhaps most important to have a more customized formula which primarily takes care of one of these items and has more mild effects in the other areas. The Chinese say, “It takes Blood to move Blood.” That is, the body burns reserves as it clears. With the clearing comes a depletion of bodily resources that over time can manifest as a number of types of deficiencies, to include the fatigue or slow healing as discussed before. These are the pathologies as discussed earlier. A clearing type of formula that also mildly tonifies will help the body maintain the higher rate of blood flow without becoming deficient. Therefore, a formula that is designed more specifically for Iron Palm training than Great Mender or Gecko Tonic may be necessary for many practitioners over time.

PlumDragon Herbs also sells two different formulas designed specifically for vigorous martial arts training that we feel satisfy very important functions for those training intensely. These formulas were not specifically designed for Iron Palm but have a history of use in the martial arts community and have since been modified for use in conditioning. Both formulas have a balance of both tonics and other herbs used for injury and Blood circulation. Each was designed at different times by different people and each has their own unique “feel” and benefits.

Tiger Bone Jia Wei Training Wine

Tiger Bone training wine is a traditional training wine that was ordinarily consumed during intense bouts of martial arts training. Tiger Bone training wine assists in the healing of tissue, the strengthening of bone, and the circulation of Blood.

Traditionally, this recipe called for the use of Tiger Bone (Hu Gu). Today, not only is this substance illegal as listed in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Appendix I, but more importantly highly unethical to use. I introduce a modified form of this wine below with Long Gu in its stead and have made a couple of additional notes and changes to increase the capability of this mixture. While Long Gu is more of a calming, sedative type of herb than Hu Gu, Long Gu does offer a calcium source for the benefit of the bones. Additionally, the sedative nature of Long Gu can be reduced by grinding and then calcining or vinegar-frying with a small portion of vinegar. This will alter the focus more towards the healing of bone and injury. Additional substitutions that more closely match that of Hu Gu are discussed below for those that prefer to use a different substance.

The following is a listing of the formula with substitutions for Tiger Bone that are commonly used today:

Long Gu – 56 grams
Dang Gui – 42 grams
Shu Di Huang – 42 grams
Niu Xi – 42 grams
Dang Gui Wei – 28 grams
Ru Xiang – 21 grams
Mo Yao – 21 grams
Rou Gui – 21 grams
Tian Ma – 14 grams
Xue Jie – 9 grams

The resins in this recipe, Mo Yao, Ru Xiang, and Xue Jie, are chiefly Blood invigorators and aid in the treatment of acute injury and rebuilding damaged tissue. Mo Yao helps reduce inflammation while Ru Xiang aids in relaxing sinew. Dang Gui and Dang Gui Wei help increase Blood flow and tonify Blood. Shu Di Huang works in concert with Dang Gui, (especially the head), to tonify Blood and Yin. It exerts its influence on the Kidney meridian and is also used in many external liniments for its use in healing injury. Niu Xi, while most beneficial on the lower body, is a useful herb for spurring the increase of circulation to remove stasis and aiding mildly in strengthening the bones and sinews. Rou Gui has a warming nature that enters and warms the channels. The very hot nature of Rou Gui essential oils augments the formula and provides some additional Yang activity to the other herbs in the recipe. Tian Ma is a strong herb which externally helps to relax the sinews by entering the Liver meridian to clear Wind when used internally, in the case of this formula.

In its original form, this formula also included one Qian (three grams) of Tian Nan Xing. This herb, however, is a toxic herb even in its treated form. I offer this knowledge for informational purposes *only!* You should leave this ingredient out of the formula if you make it. You might consider including processed Ban Xia as one possible substitute. Ban Xia in its available form is processed and non-toxic. The addition of Gou Teng in six gram quantity would also be a suitable substitute as well.

The above ingredients will make one gallon of training wine. Mix these herbs – crushed or whole– with alcohol, (rice wine for lower alcohol percentage, vodka for higher percentage), and allow to age for at least three months. Aging for six months is better. A single shot of this wine prior to training is one traditional dosage.

As is, this formula works well but lacks some focus. To focus the formula on the upper body, you may consider adding Gui Zhi or Qiang Huo to the formula. Chai Hu can strongly open the Liver, and has ascending, descending, and dispersing functions that may be useful. Use small measurements of Chai Hu to facilitate this function, as it will enter the Liver to remove stagnation that may result from the pathologies discussed previously. Xiang Fu is also a decent option to regulate flow in the Liver. To help with the bone strengthening properties, you may consider adding Gu Sui Bu, Xu Duan, or Wu Jia Pi. To focus on the lower back or knees, you may consider adding Du Huo or Sang Ji Sheng. For more focus on injuries, Hong Hua, Tao Ren, and Chuan Xiong may be good additions. The addition of Bai Zhu or Fu Ling will aid in strengthening the Spleen to tonify Qi, while Bai Zhi will support Dang Gui Wei in pushing the actions of the formula out to the extremities. Bai Zhi is also a useful pain-killing herb.

Additionally, Long Gu has a very Shen calming function. For some, this may be a welcome addition. However, to remove this function but maintain the bone-strengthening properties, you might consider removing Long Gu or reducing the dosage, and adding Du Zhong and/or Qian Nian Jian. Qian Nian Jian is a very close match to Hu Gu. For a bit more punch, you can also add Lu Rong or Lu Jiao Jiao. However, as strong as these two herbs are, they are also much more expensive and not always necessary. Qian Nian becomes the best choice when cost matters.

Tiger Bone training wine is usually produced as a training wine. The above herbs can be added to one gallon of alcohol and allowed to age for several months before use, agitating occasionally. PlumDragon fills this recipe occasionally and customers who have tried this traditional recipe have been quite happy with the results.

Gu Zhe Tang

Gu Zhe Tang, or Bone Break Decoction, is an old classical Chinese formula used for the treatment and repair of bone injuries and fractures. The chief and assistant herbs in this formula heal bone by tonifying the Kidney to strengthen bone, as well as by increasing Blood flow to the bone to accelerate healing. Astringent herbs in Gu Zhe Tang are specially chosen herbs that are directed at the Kidney and help build and consolidate the production of fresh bone formations as the healing process transpires. Qing Pi strongly aids in the regulation of Qi, offsetting some of the potentially cloying effects of herbs such as Shu Di Huang.

While relatively small and simple in design, this formula does work quite well and can be used to significantly reduce the healing times associated with deep injuries to bone. The use of a good Dit Da Jow can heal from the outside in while Gu Zhe Tang works from the inside out.

Gu Zhe Tang is composed of the following herbs:

Xu Duan – 28 grams
Shu Di Huang – 28 grams
Dang Gui – 14 grams
Niu Xi – 14 grams
Wu Jia Pi – 14 grams
Shan Zhu Yu – 14 grams
Du Zhong – 14 grams
Bai Shao – 14 grams

Fu Ling – 14 grams

Qing Pi – 14 grams

In this formula, you can see immediately that Xu Duan is the chief herb, which is well suited for invigorating Blood to heal injury to bone, while also strengthening bone as a Yang tonic. Wu Jia Pi and Du Zhong support this function as well, while astringents help to bind and rebuild bone. Additional Blood invigorators provide much needed nutrients to the site of injury for speedy repair.

For treating moderate injuries to bone, these herbs can be made as a tea by adding them to about ¾ gallon of fresh water and cooking in an earthenware pot for approximately 45 minutes. The resultant tea is then imbibed at the rate of ½ cup, two to three times per day until the tea is gone. In some clinical settings, the dosage may be as high as one full cup, two to three times per day. Consult your local herbalist or healthcare professional for exact dosage guidelines.

Alternatively, for conditioning such as Iron Palm, it is recommended that this recipe be made as a training wine to supplement daily training. Add crushed herbs to one gallon of alcohol between 20-40% and allow to age in dark for at least three months, agitating occasionally. One can take one ounce of this wine prior to training in the evenings.

Also of note, Qing Pi is a quite strong herb and is often used on the lower part of the body. Chen Pi, the aged citrus peel, can be substituted, as it is more common for the upper portion of the body and offers a smoother execution. Zi Ran Tong is also useful in the healing of bone injuries and can be added to this formula. Use the calcined or semi-powdered form of this herb. Using the larger pieces of unprocessed Zi Ran Tang severely hinders the ability of this herb to function properly and is practically useless.

Iron Bone Training Powder

Iron Bone Training Powder is a proprietary formula used as an adjunct internal formula for Iron Palm training. It is specialized for Iron Palm, and hence more ideal for Iron Palm training than other formulas discussed up to this point.

Iron Bone Training Powder includes herbs that direct the formula to the upper part of the body, and outward towards the extremities. The full proprietary formula includes 21 herbs in all and is based partially off of the Gu Zhe Tang discussed previously. I have provided a scaled down 18-herb version here that is very useful and suitable for most all Iron Palm training regimens, save for the most intense of programs.

The appeal of this particular formula is that it successfully satisfies more of the pathologies discussed in the previous sections than the two formulas discussed immediately above. While it is not as complete as the Comprehensive Iron Palm Tonic, it is a closer match than many Iron Palm adjuncts available around the world.

Iron Bone Training Powder is composed of the following herbs:

Gu Sui Bu – 30 grams
Xu Duan – 30 grams
Wu Jia Pi – 30 grams
Lu Rong – 30 grams
Dang Gui Wei – 30 grams
Dang Shen – 20 grams
Gui Zhi – 20 grams
Dan Shen – 15 grams
Bu Gu Zhi – 15 grams
Sang Zhi – 15 grams
Du Zhong – 15 grams
Shen Jin Cao – 15 grams
San Qi – 15 grams
Shu Di – 15 grams
Bai Shao – 15 grams
Huang Qi – 10 grams
Huang Jing – 10 grams
Guo Qi Zi – 10 grams

This formula is usually ground finely and the powder is mixed with honey to make pills. Pills are usually stored in the refrigerator to maintain freshness and potency. The standard dosage per pill is three grams of powder. It also works quite well as a training wine and the above quantities will make one gallon of training wine. Despite the absence of 3 very strong ingredients in the full version, the above will make quite a strong training wine.

We can see there are a few patterns developing in regard to herbs being used. Gu Sui Bu and Xu Duan are often used together. These Yang tonics heal and strengthen bone and invigorate Blood circulation to aid in healing injury. Lu Rong strongly backs up that function, as does the Wind-Damp dispelling herb, Wu Jia Pi. The addition of Bu Gu Zhi, Du Zhong, and Huang Jing completes the battery of herbs used for this purpose. While Huang Jing is principally a Yin tonic, it is said to support the development of the bone and bone marrow.

Dang Gui Wei, Dan Shen, San Qi, Gui Zhi, and Bai Shao all have varying degrees of Blood invigorating and injury-healing actions in addition to the Gu Sui Bu/Xu Duan discussed above. San Qi strongly performs this function and also is an excellent herb to stop bleeding. Shen Jin Cao, Sang Zhi, and Gui Zhi all operate to warm and open the channels at varying strengths. Shen Jin Cao also helps to relax sinew in tandem with Bai Shao, Gui Zhi mildly aids in blood flow, and Sang Zhi is most useful for its job in addressing the extremities.

Lastly, Dang Shen, Shu Di, Bai Shao, Huang Qi, and Gou Qi Zi are all very useful tonic herbs that help build and support various functions in the body. These herbs have multiple functions and are chosen for a number of intricate reasons in this formula.

To make a large batch of these pills, (rather than make wine), the formula can be filled by multiplying all values by 10. That is, rather than fill the formula with 30 grams of the main herbs it can be filled with 300 grams. Herbs appearing in 15 gram quantity would be filled at 150 grams, and so on. This allows one to make a very large batch of pills that last a long time. The powder should then be separated into three gram denominations and then combined with the appropriate amount of honey. For long-term use, these pills can be used at the rate of one pill per day.

Meridians

There is one other potentially important action that is less often covered, falling within the category of “clearing.” This is to include herbs that maintain the functionality of the meridian channels, a network of circulating vessels that cover the body beneath the skin. While some crossover seems to exist between these meridians and anatomical objects such as blood vessels and nerves, these circulating vessels are not necessarily tangible physical items like veins or arteries, but serve a more diagnostic, semantic purpose. Ensuring that the channels and collaterals remain “unblocked” and their flow is unimpeded is important for times when the body is pushed or stressed, as well as for optimum function of the Chinese organs and the regulation of energy flow between these organs. From a Chinese medical perspective, opening the channels and collaterals allows the organ systems to work at peak performance, to maintain good circulation and proper communication between systems of the body. Opening the channels and keeping them unblocked is the body’s way of providing healing and conditioning aid in the most efficient way possible. When stasis within or outside the meridians occurs, there is generally pain, weakness, and a breakdown of bodily function.

Herbs that aid in opening and unblocking the meridians will appear primarily in the Wind-Damp category and are often labeled as having the ability to “open the channels and collaterals.”

To summarize succinctly what has been covered thus far, there are four primary concerns that one might wish to address in a comprehensive internal Iron Palm herbal recipe:

Tonify the Spleen to ensure energy is being created as efficiently as possible, while also helping the body to drain Dampness, (which may manifest as edema, Blood stasis, or inflammation/swelling in the hands), quickly.

Tonify the Kidney, (and support the Liver), to ensure bone and sinew is healed and strengthened as effectively as possible. Strengthening the Kidney, being in part the body’s “battery,” will also aid with energy levels and removing stagnation from the Liver, keeping sinew relaxed and supple.

Clear Blood stagnation by utilizing herbs which invigorate Blood to push out coagulations due to training and spur the healing process in the case that injury is incurred during Iron Palm training.

Clear blockage in the channels and dilate the channels to keep organ operation and circulation at an optimal level. Opening the Liver will keep tendons supple and relaxed while keeping blockage from occurring in the joints and preventing arthritic pain from introducing itself.

With these four primary functions in mind, there is also one more issue that was brought up in the discussion on pathology: The protection of the PC-8 acupuncture point at the heart of both palms. This issue may be covered inadvertently by herbs used to satisfy the above set of primary actions. However, regardless of whether a practitioner of Iron Palm trains both hands or only the right hand, including additional herbs in a comprehensive formula which have the sole action to protect the heart or Pericardium is certainly a worthwhile endeavor. Many individuals may notice no ill-effects of this nature. However, if they do manifest, herbs should be added in accordance with your local herbalist to address this issue.

As a final point of note, we might also be interested in ancillary goals that don’t necessarily effect the pathology, such as directing the formula upward in the body, altering its overall temperature, intensifying the drying nature of the formula, producing a thicker or more resinous liniment, (in the case of Dit Da Jow), or aiding in the development of tissue such as skin. These are items that

some schools address to support their training, and some don't. They are of importance to consider when one is modifying or designing a formula for specific custom training.

Herbs such as Gui Zhi, Chai Hu, Qiang Huo, and other will direct the functions of a formula upwards or work best on the upper body. Herbs such as Dang Gui Wei and Bai Zhi help to push outward to the extremities. Ge Gen is useful for the shoulder but generally is used for external Wind conditions such as common cold and flu.

Many Heat-clearing herbs have a dry nature. Huang Bai, Huang Qin, and Long Dan Cao are exemplary for this task.

Resins such as Xue Jie, Er Cha, Ru Xiang, and Mo Yao can help increase the lubricating resinous feel of a liniment. Hu Po is also very good at this task. These resins should be thoroughly crushed to facilitate their extraction into the solvent.

Many herbs can aid in the development of skin and tissue. Huang Qi and Xue Jie are useful herbs for this function.

External Formulas – Iron Palm Dit Da Jow

Iron Palm Dit Da Jow recipes generally contain a slew of herbs that perform a number of functions which differ from that of an ordinary injury Dit Da Jow. These functions seek to keep the hand healthy and free from injury, while also spurring the progress of conditioning. Training without a good Iron Palm Jow can leave hands damaged early on as well as later in life. As previously stated, while different Iron Palm jows use different herbs to perform different tasks, it is important for any Iron Palm Jow to cover these actions:

- Open and unblock the channels.
- Heal/strengthen bone and sinew.
- Increase circulation to the hand.
- Heal any injury that takes place during training.

Opening and unblocking the channels has been discussed earlier in terms of internal use and it is no different with the external application of liniments. The channels, which run beneath the skin, should be unblocked, freely flowing, and opened for training. An externally applied Iron Palm Jow is a great way to locally open the channels in a short period of time. The same function can be performed with acupuncture, but it takes much more time and is not realistic for

someone who trains Iron Palm once or more every day. While external application of jow probably does not operate on as deep of a level on the channels and the rest of the body as herbs that are taken internally, this is potentially the most important function of an Iron Palm Jow.

Many of the herbs that open the channels are very penetrating and dispersing in nature, and are generally grouped in a category of herbs that is said to dispel what the Chinese call “Wind-Damp” conditions; the actions of these herbs tends to often manifest as what the Western world likes to call “arthritis.” The Chinese term “Bi-Syndrome” often refers to blockages that can cause the sensation of arthritic conditions or pain. In other words, many of the channel opening herbs in an Iron Palm formula are herbs which, in essence, help to keep the hands free of arthritic problems and painful joints. This is why these herbs often create part of the base of functionality in Iron Palm formulas; people who do not use Iron Palm Jow tend to get arthritis, while those who do use the proper liniment have healthy and strong hands later in life. Some herbs that are used in liniments to perform this function include Wu Jia Pi, Sang Ji Sheng, Hai Tong Pi, and Mu Gua, which has been used for hundreds of years by martial artists to help maintain joint health during strength and conditioning exercises.

Healing and strengthening of bone and sinew is also a very important function of an Iron Palm liniment. Some of these herbs enter the Kidney meridians to tonify the Kidney or Liver, or to provide additional Blood flow to muscle and sinew. Huang Jing, for example, is a Kidney Yin tonic that is said to help promote the health and growth of bone marrow. Other herbs aid in the healing and strengthening process by offering calcium and other minerals that provide the body necessary components to efficiently grow bone. These various herbs fall into a number of categories with a number of additional uses, but three of the most common herbs for this purpose are ones that have been discussed earlier: Long Gu, Xu Duan, and Gu Sui Bu. Long Gu, (a common substitute for Hu Gu, which was used in the past), provides calcium to the bones; as noted earlier, Qian Nian Jian is perhaps a better herb for this purpose than Long Gu. Xu Duan and Gu Sui Bu are Yang tonics that strengthen bone by building/tonifying the Kidney meridian, as well as increase the flow of Blood to these structures. Iron Palm Dit Da Jow that is very dark generally has a larger quantity of tonic herbs which release the darker tannins into the jow when aging.

Increasing circulation to the hand helps to prepare the body for the stress that it will undergo during training. Moving and regulating Qi/Blood flow to the hand is part of where the “heavy hand” feeling and mild throb that some people feel during training comes from. Providing increased circulation to the hand provides tissue cells with additional nutrients from the Blood to help prevent injury from developing and heal any injury that develops much more rapidly. Many of these

herbs also exhibit action to inhibit platelet aggregation, reduce bleeding, and act as anti-coagulants.

Increasing circulation to the hand is taken care of, in part, by herbs already discussed, such as Xu Duan. However, there are other herbs which help to increase circulation more strongly. Many of these fall into the category of herbs called “Blood Invigorators.” These herbs generally increase Blood flow to dispel stasis. Herbs such as Chuan Xiong, Tao Ren, and Dan Shen perform these functions, (among others), while common resins such as Mo Yao and Ru Xiang work to increase Blood flow and also reduce pain. Many of these herbs are also found in bruise/injury Dit Da Jow formulas for their inherent capability to break up bruising and reduce inflammation while increasing local circulation. Many of these herbs have been studied and have been shown to house compounds which exhibit effects such as anti-coagulant, cardiotoxic, CNS stimulant, and as hemostatics. Many also help generate new tissue through these functions.

In addition, there are herbs from other functional categories such as “Regulate Qi” herbs that help serve the purpose of moving Blood and Qi. Perhaps the most important herb worth mentioning is San Qi, or Pseudoginseng, (Pseudoginseng has no relation to Ginseng and serves a very different function). This herb has the paradoxical effect of being able to stop bleeding while concurrently moving Blood, and it has a significant capacity to perform both of these functions. While it does not make the cornerstone of most Iron Palm formulas, its importance in any Dit Da formula is undeniable. Pu Huang has similar function and pairs quite well with San Qi, especially in injury liniments. Many of these more clearing herbs will produce Iron Palm Jow that is somewhat lighter in color. Remember, while dark jow is a general mark of a well aged formula, some herbs will produce a naturally lighter liniment, (relatively speaking), due to variations in tannin/alkaloid content.



Whole San Qi Root. Some San Qi has black extrusions from friction during transport.

The underlying function of mildly healing any injury that happens to occur is usually pretty well covered, based on the herbs that appear from other previous categories. However, there are some added herbs that can be used to help generate tissue and heal injury. Xue Jie is a popular herb for this function and is a somewhat expensive resin. It is used both internally and externally and is the Chief ingredient in Qi Li San, a basic classical injury recipe which is often publicly referred to as a “Wing Chun Dit Da Jow.” Er Cha, Hu Zhang, and Yu Jin are three other herbs that are often overlooked but exhibit helpful actions to help support the healing of injuries and generation of new tissue. Hu Zhang, a cold Blood invigorator, is an important ingredient in the commercial product, Zheng Gu Shui. Hu Zhang is useful in invigorating the Blood and also reducing inflammation to mitigate pain.

While also not a prerequisite for a fantastic Iron Palm Jow recipe, many of the popular and powerfully acting Iron Palm recipes have herbs that, among other things, allow the formula to operate most efficiently on certain parts of the body; specifically the hands and arms. Some of these herbs work to push the function of the formula upward in the body, while others work directly on the upper body. Some work on specific organ meridians while others push the actions of the herbs out to the extremities. In this way, Iron Palm Jow becomes more specific for hand conditioning and may not be the best option for someone interested, for example, in conditioning their shins.

These functions, and more, are often seen almost verbatim when analyzing an Iron Palm Jow formula. Some formulations may include additions that are astringent or focus more on the skin, add additional resins to seal the hand, or herbs that pacify the Shen or a number of other tasks. However, it is important that a good Iron Palm Jow not be just an ordinary bruise liniment and that while these additional types of actions are fine to incorporate, Iron Palm Jow should encompass the four criteria previously mentioned, (channel opening, bone strengthening, circulation increase, and injury healing/prevention), in one way or another. It should be a well-designed, well thought-out formula that is not simply a mish-mash of many herbs added for erroneous reasons. Based on our experiences, most of the properly focused and well-refined Iron Palm formulas out there that use between 20-30 herbs often produce the clearest results in training without sacrificing potency.

The Aroma of Iron Palm Jow

Those newly initiated to Iron Palm, and Dit Da Jow in general, find the smells to be fascinating. Some people enjoy the smells of varying formulas while others are disgusted by the aromas. Alternatively, many people who have been training

these types of conditioning methods for years may pass off the smells as irrelevant or unimportant.

Coincidentally, some Iron Palm jows were designed to be processed and produced in ways that bring about specific types of olfactory sensations. Using Pao Zhi cooking methods as well as grinding of certain herbs, various aromas and actions can be brought out more clearly. Whether it be spicy, have a subtle richness, or a sourness that makes your taste buds pucker like eating a fresh cranberry, some of these smells are produced on purpose and are meant to act as a cue to your mind that training is about to begin. Physiologically, this is quite similar in concept to Pavlov's Dog. Ultimately, when Iron Palm has become a "habit," a familiar smell from your Iron Palm Jow can help prepare your body by physiologically beginning the process of Blood flow and opening of channels, and also aid you mentally by placing you in the proper state of mind that is conducive for training the mind-body connection that many Chinese practices such as Iron Palm are known for. Both the Ku Yu Cheong and Fung Doe Duk Coconut Break formulas are known for their aroma, often being likened to maple syrup. This specific scent is no coincidence.

While a number of formulas don't use any specific methods to create a unique smell, at PlumDragon we have designed methods which bring about a specific aroma for each and every Dit Da Jow, (premade or herb pack), that leaves the door. I feel it is an important factor in how your body accepts the training that you are doing.

Beginner Level Iron Palm Recipe

The formula given below is an Iron Palm recipe that is useful for those who are in early stages of Iron Palm, training on beans, rice, or gravel bags. It incorporates herbs that satisfy all of the functional criteria mentioned earlier. While it will not produce a liniment that is strong enough for advanced stages of training such as that done on a steel shot bag, it does a great job of fulfilling the important functions of an Iron Palm Jow. Each herb listed is provided with a brief explanation of the actions it performs externally. Make note that almost all of the herbs listed fulfill one of the four primary functions of an Iron Palm Jow listed earlier.

Early-Stage Iron Palm Jow

Zi Ran Tong (27 grams)

- Strengthens bone and sinew, invigorates Blood to remove stasis.

Gu Sui Bu (21 grams)

- Tonifies Kidney to strengthen bone and increases Blood flow to heal deep injury.
- Xu Duan** (21 grams)
- Tonifies Kidney to strengthen bone and increases Blood flow to heal deep injury.
- Liu Ji Nu** (21 grams)
- Opens channels, strongly invigorates Blood to remove Blood stasis.
- Chen Pi** (18 grams)
- Regulates the circulation of Qi and works to regulate flow and resolve dampness.
- San Qi** (15 grams)
- Stops bleeding and strongly increases Blood circulation.
- Pu Huang** (15 grams)
- Stops bleeding and increases Blood circulation. Works well in conjunction with San Qi.
- Wei Ling Xian** (15 grams)
- Opens channels, relieves pain and dispels Wind-Damp blockage.
- Hai Tong Pi** (15 grams)
- Opens channels and dispels Wind-Damp.
- Jiang Huang** (15 grams)
- Invigorates Blood flow to heal injury and mildly opens the channels.
- Dang Gui Wei** (12 grams)
- Mildly invigorates Blood flow, especially in the extremities.
- Du Zhong** (12 grams)
- Tonifies Kidney to strengthen bone and sinew.
- Ru Xiang** (12 grams)
- Invigorates Blood flow and relaxes sinews.
- Mo Yao** (12 grams)
- Invigorates Blood flow and relieves pain.
- Xue Jie** (12 grams)
- Increases Blood circulation to heal injury and helps produce new flesh.
- Shu Di Huang** (9 grams)
- Blood tonic and aids in production of new tissue from injury.
- Mu Gua** (9 grams)
- Opens channels and relaxes sinews.
- Zhi Zi** (9 grams)
- Cooling herb helps to clear Heat, reduce inflammation, and aid in the healing process.

This formula will make 1 gallon of iron palm liniment and can be produced in the usual manner with Vodka. The herbs can be ground or left whole, but the Chen Pi in this formula should be finely ground to aid in the aromatic feel of the formula as mentioned above. For a more resinous feel, increase the measurements of Ru Xiang and Mo Yao to 18 grams.

With the proliferation of “secrets” in Chinese herbalism and martial arts, it is really quite a shame that the types of formulas above are not more readily available. The Iron Palm recipe above is simple and only suitable for the beginning (and possibly intermediate) stages of training, but even more advanced formulas are shrouded in much more secrecy and mysticism than they should be. If you have put in the time, money, and devotion, there is no reason your teachers should not be willing to share herbal information with you. Do not feed this tainted secrecy, but rather seek education elsewhere.

Later-Stage Ku Yu Cheong Iron Palm Jow

When you move up to some type of metallic shot, or seem to become injured with the above formula, it may be time to progress to another formula. The Ku Yu Cheong formula presented below is a very popular and powerful formula and has appeared in public articles in the past in Chinese characters, although people almost ubiquitously do not realize what they are looking at, nor are they able to find a way to have it filled. Likewise, many martial arts schools actually use this formula as their Iron Palm Jow but often don't tell people, (or don't know), that they are simply using Ku Yu Cheong Iron Palm Jow or some variant, such as the Wong Fei Hung formula or the Hung Gar Iron Palm Jow sold on the PlumDragon web store. Nevertheless, it is a favorite here at PlumDragon and many hundreds of people have tested its efficacy.

It is being offered here in its full form, with the addition of the more powerful “Level 2” herbs that make this suitable for serious training on a steel shot bag. Barring only a few caveats, this formula should be sufficient for all of your advanced Iron Palm training. If you increase your intensity, duration, etc. on a shot bag to the point that this formula fails you, it is easily modified to make it stronger.

Ku Yu Cheong Formula

Zi Ran Tong – 18 grams

Hong Hua – 18 grams

Long Gu – 18 grams

Lu Jin – 18 grams

Bai Hua She – 18 grams
Wei Ling Xian – 15 grams
Wu Jia Pi – 15 grams
Ru Xiang – 15 grams
Tu Bie Chong – 15 grams
Su Mu – 15 grams
Wu Ling Zhi – 12 grams
Dang Gui Wei – 12 grams
Xu Duan – 12 grams
Xue Jie – 12 grams
Gui Zhi – 12 grams (this one is written originally as 3.5 chien, or 10.5 grams. I prefer 12 grams)
Bai Shao – 12 grams
San Qi – 12 grams
Mu Xiang – 12 grams
Fang Feng – 12 grams
Chi Shao – 12 grams
Kuan Jin Teng – 12 grams
Bai Zhi – 12 grams
Ze Lan – 12 grams
Qiang Huo – 12 grams
Tao Ren – 12 grams
Hai Long – 12 grams
Rou Gui – 9 grams
Mu Tong – 9 grams
Gua Lou Ren – 9 grams

The above herbs will make one gallon of very strong Iron Palm liniment. Follow the basic procedure for mixing this with alcohol and allow at least three months of aging time. Aging for six months is better. Additionally, PlumDragon Herbs fills this formula in herb packs and produces it with all of the necessary processing and grinding already done. Half-gallons are also available if you prefer for PlumDragon to perform the cooking process as well.

Chuan Shan Jia also often appears in this advanced version of the formula. However, it is unnecessary as it is incredibly expensive and the extraction, even with proper processing, is poor. Ji Xue Teng, San Leng/E Zhu, or Chuan Niu Xi can be substituted in its stead. You don't need all three substitutions. The inclusion of 12 or 15 grams of both San Leng and E Zhu helps to increase the moving properties of this formula and is a very good addition to make.

Lastly, while Lu Jin appears in this formula, it is debatable how big of a difference it actually makes in the overall strength. It is expensive and difficult to work with. It can likely be left out of the above mix with no ill results.

clinical trials continue to be performed and published and insurance carriers start to spread beyond “super bills” and create policies that pay for more acupuncture treatments at lower deductibles, this interesting treatment tool has continued to gain steam in the West. In the future, acupuncture will hopefully sit alongside Western biomedicine as an effective complimentary treatment modality for people who have minor or serious medical problems, as well as for those of us who are directly vested in their Iron Palm training program.

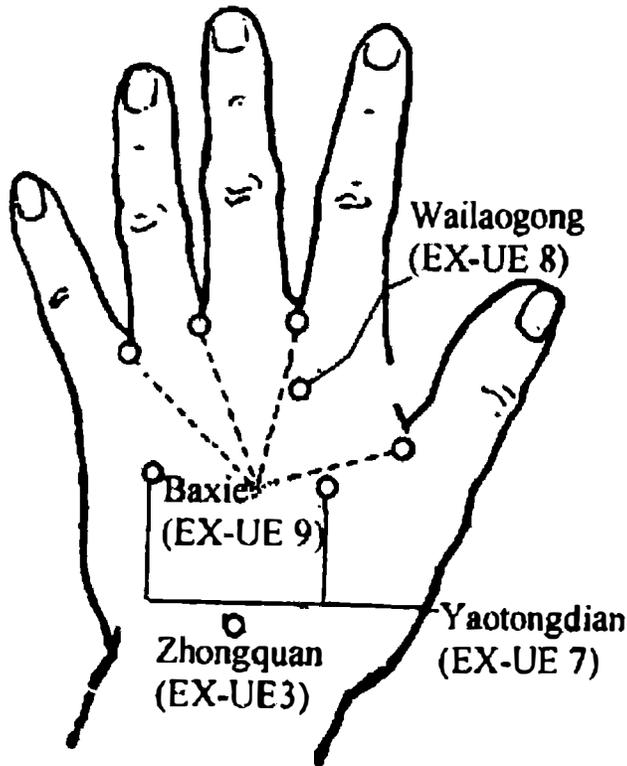
I offer below a few batteries of acupuncture treatments, courtesy of development and use through Dr. Mike Neeley, which can be useful for the martial artist training in Iron Palm. One benefit of acupuncture over the cookie-cutter methods of pharmaceuticals is that each acupuncture treatment can, and should, be customized to suit the ever-changing patterns of an individual patient. That said, please be aware that it is important that you allow a well-qualified Chinese healthcare professional to diagnose your patterns and perform treatments as they see fit. I am not a doctor in any capacity and I do not and cannot recommend or offer any advice on acupuncture or other medical treatments. So, please take these treatments to your acupuncturist, inform them of your training and your intent, and allow them to use the presented information, (or not), in their assessment of the best way to go about taking care of your needs. They may choose to do treatments using only the acupuncture points below or they may incorporate it into a more thorough treatment. They may even recommend that you not use any of the below treatments until one or more other root issues are addressed more thoroughly. Please follow their advice; they are there to help you.

Ba Feng/Ba Xie

Ba Feng/Ba Xie, also known as the eight Winds or eight evils, is a series of acupuncture points in the hands or feet. These eight points, situated between the knuckles, (the dorsum of each hand on the web between the fingers), are traditionally used to clear Wind, move Qi and Blood, ward off arthritic conditions in the knuckles, and reduce pain and inflammation. This series of points was tested fairly extensively on me prior to writing this book, under the treatment of Dr. Michael Neeley. While they have not been put to trial in a scientific study, it is my personal opinion that, done weekly during Iron Palm training, this treatment alone can have a significant and noticeable effect on the health of the hands and joints in the knuckles. It can be performed in tandem with a more thorough treatment or as a single treatment.

The Ba Feng in particular are considered "extra" points and are not correlated with any acupuncture points on the conventional organ meridians. The diagram

below shows the location of these points as well as some other extra sets of points in the hand.



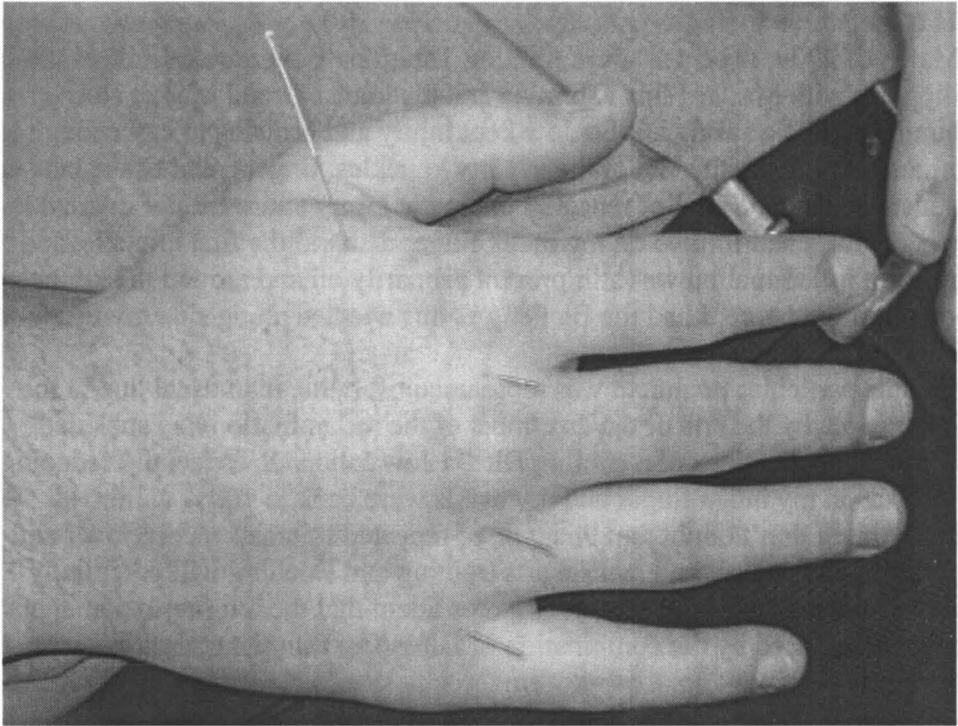
When the Ba Xie points are needed, (EX-UE 9 above), one who is adept with breathing exercises and Qigong may notice that the hands can take on a very heavy feel during and after portions of acupuncture sessions. If Qigong and meditation are activities that you feel you get a good deal of benefit from, take advantage of the treatments by performing static Qigong routines while sitting or laying down during the acupuncture session. Circulation tends to increase and blockages that cause pain tend to diminish after a couple of treatments. Continued treatments seem to help keep the hands healthy and free of pain. An area of bruising, injury, and/or inflammation that may be visible prior to treatment tends to dissipate if treatments are kept consistent. It is my opinion that due to the simplicity of this treatment and its relative positive effect, this is probably the acupuncture treatment that is of the most value to those who participate in rigorous Iron Palm routines, especially when coupled with acupuncture points that address the Kidney, Liver and Spleen. Through the treatments that Dr Mike Neeley performed on me, they were often combined with other more routine points with no contraindications.

In March of 2009, I spent 10 days training Tabimina Balintawak Arnis in the Philippines with Master Flint Tabimina and his father, Grand Master Bob Tabimina. While a strong Dit Da Jow kept injury and bruising at bay enough to continue training, by the end of the trip my knuckles, fingers, and tissue between had sustained a good deal of repeated traumatic injury and were not in great shape. Nodules had formed on my index finger distal to the first knuckle, and significant inflammation was still present primarily on and around the knuckles. Upon returning home, I had the Ba Feng points needled along side my usual acupuncture treatment.

While this particular treatment was more uncomfortable than usual due to the inflammation, by the end of the day, most of the inflammation had subsided. Subsequent applications of a cooling Dit Da Jow followed, especially reducing the nodule on my index finger and my hands were back to 100% within 48 hours. While I don't doubt that this type of repeated trauma I receive over and over during my stick-based martial arts training and teaching will potentially lead to problems later on, I feel entirely confident that the long-term damage is *drastically* reduced by the combination of Dit Da and acupuncture treatments I consistently receive.

Please keep in mind that this is an extreme example. You should *not* receive injuries like this through your Iron Palm training. Nevertheless, these treatments can be useful, both for when injuries are realized as well as in an effort to deter damage and keep the hands as healthy as possible during Iron Palm training.

The following picture illustrates one of the treatments I received some time after returning from the Philippines. While only one hand is visible below, both hands are being needled identically. The three lower needles are specialized "hand needles," used for these types of points on the hands, measuring 0.18 x 8mm. Notice the small size in comparison to the more conventional sized needle at the top, which can measure 0.18 x 13mm or larger.



Ba Xie Acupuncture treatment, March 2009. Both hands are needed.

In March of 2010, I returned to the Philippines for 12 days of intense training and for a gathering of all Tabimina Balintawak brothers and sisters in celebration of Sir Bob Tabimina's birthday. As should be expected with stick work, I once again returned with hands that had slowly but surely received a number of injuries over the days. While Dit Da Jow kept the hands healthy and working properly, the healing process seemed slightly less effective having not performed any acupuncture treatments upon arriving home.

This is a prime example of how one should attempt to use more than one treatment method when working with more serious injuries. Alone, any of these treatments will offer a great deal of aid in healing injury or helping with Iron Palm training. However, combining multiple relevant treatment methods is akin to the old adage, "the whole is more than the sum of its parts" and sums up the meaning of "synergistic effect."

Hua Tuo Jie Ji

The Hua Tuo Jie Ji, translated as Hua Tuo Bilateral Spinal Points, is another treatment which your acupuncturist may find helpful. This treatment is a series

of points located immediately lateral to the inferior end of the spinous processes of the cervical and thoracic and lumbar vertebrae.

Named after Hua Tuo, a famous Chinese Physician, these points are often used to restore the smooth flow of Qi and Blood and are of benefit to the back and joints and helpful in strengthening and relaxing sinew, especially in the extremities.

Kidney Points

In Chinese Medical Theory, the Kidneys “rule the bones.” They are also in charge of growth, maturation, reproduction and the central nervous system. Iron Palm training requires, among other things, the striking of the Iron Palm bags. Striking in this way sends a shock wave through the bones. This repeated striking can have the effect of diminishing the Kidney’s functions. Therefore, it is always wise to tonify the Kidneys with acupuncture points such as Kidney three, (the Kidney source point which acts to stabilize and tonify the Kidney), Kidney six, (which tonifies and regulates the Kidney, especially Kidney Yin), and possibly others as recommended by your local acupuncturist.

Liver Points

The Liver rules the tendons and sinews and is often called “the Great Regulator.” These connective tissues take repeated strains during Iron Palm training. Additionally, stagnation most easily occurs here, causing tightness and reducing proper circulation (regulation). Therefore, it is always a good idea to incorporate Liver acupuncture points during your training/acupuncture routine; points that strengthen the function of the Liver (not the physical Liver, but the Chinese “idea” of a Liver) and reduce stagnation. The following Liver points may be very helpful during Iron Palm training:

Liver 2: Regulates the Liver (especially Qi and Yang), clears Heat, and invigorates the Blood.

Liver 3: Regulates and tonifies the Liver (Qi, Yang, Blood, and Yin), invigorates the Blood, reduces Heat and pain, regulates and spreads the flow of Qi, and extinguishes Liver Wind to relax the sinews.

Liver 13: Strengthens Spleen Qi and Yang, regulates Qi and invigorates the Blood, and softens hard masses.

Liver 14: Regulates and spreads Liver Qi, and transforms Damp-Heat.

Spleen Points

The Spleen rules the flesh and is the producer of Qi. It is your energy production center and the organ meridian which is responsible for the maintenance of the proper level of dryness and dampness within the body. During Iron Palm training, the repeated striking of the bag causes damage to the flesh on the palms, back of hands, and possibly the knuckles and wrists. Properly tonifying the muscular tissues with acupuncture points like Spleen 6, (tonifies Spleen Qi and Yang, facilitates Blood flow, tonifies Kidney Yin and Essence, regulates the Liver, and softens hard masses), and Spleen 9, (regulates Spleen Yang and resolves dampness), during Iron Palm training will be very helpful. Aiding in the function of the Spleen will also keep coagulation of fluids and inflammation to a minimum.

Qigong for Iron Palm

Qigong is a healing system that incorporates either static postures or slow smooth rhythmic movements with the very specific focus of keeping the mind in the here and now, paying specific attention to what is taking place within the body, (awareness of posture, pain, circulation, tension, uncomfortable feelings, alignment, etc). Common in Qigong routines is the mental note of moving energy to specific places in the body using a type of engram, such as imagining light moving to the hands, or Blood and Qi moving up the spine or around the microcosmic orbit. Perhaps the most important aspect of Qigong is the mind-body connection; keeping the mind focused on the here and now. More secondary benefits include the ability of the body to lead Qi to the hands or circulate energy through the body for healing purposes, and to aid in keeping channels opened and unblocked.

Some Iron Palm programs spend a great deal of time in Qigong postures and movements, both before and after actually striking the bag. While the specifics vary by program, I feel that utilizing such programs as Yi Jin Jing and Ba Duan Jin are perfect for the martial artist in general and are all that is needed. More elaborate routines tend to simply be variations of the same motions and thought processes. Yi Jin Jing and Ba Duan Jin both produce good results and are common and well known. Down-to-earth in nature, they are not shrouded in a great deal of unnecessary secrecy and contain all the details necessary for good Qigong training. Additionally, pieces of these sets can be used or modified for inclusion just prior to, or following Iron Palm training. We can use these basics in a way conducive to our training needs. Please see Appendix II for a listing of sources for good instruction on these sets.

Let's Get Real

It is worth mentioning that while almost all of the Iron Palm programs out in current day stress the importance of Qigong, I feel that the development of Iron Palm is not based on your Qigong practice. That is, Qigong does not directly affect your ability to produce power in a strike, nor does it itself strengthen your hand. Qigong is a healthy and worthwhile activity, but your ability to strengthen the hand and produce power in your strikes is a direct result of many hours of arduous conditioning practice and time devoted to issuing power. Please understand that the Qigong work you do in addition to your Iron Palm work is supplementary; it will not increase your ability to strike or break, but will aid in maintaining your overall health and in teaching your body to route Blood to the hands. Beginner Iron Palm students may experience useful benefit from Qigong exercises as they learn to quiet the mind and become familiar with the body's ability to lead the circulation to parts of the body with intent. New students who have done very little in the way of physical activity will also benefit from Qigong, as it will provide them a basic exercise in which they can work on basic coordination skill. Once a student learns these facets, this tool can be performed with less duration and frequency. Then the focus should shift to actual Iron Palm training, if that is in fact the goal. If the goal is more towards internal cultivation, meditation, and health and longevity, then qigong should remain a central part of your training!

Also, not including Qigong in your training will not cause health problems with the hand. The use of jow and consciously making sure that you do not over-train will ensure that your hands remain healthy and free of pain over the years. If your goal is power development and conditioning of the hand, then optimal training does *not* include Qigong training. Do Qigong because you enjoy it, because you use it as a health modality in Iron Palm, or because you are working on one of the basic focuses mentioned in the previous paragraph; not because you feel you must.

With that said, I will present two basic Qigong exercises that I have found to be useful over the years. These routines seem to easily produce physical sensations akin to increased Blood flow in the hands in a short period of time and have served me well in early phases of training. I feel that given a Qigong routine that works well for you, 5-10 minutes of Qigong performed either before or after your training is completely sufficient. Ultimately, as mentioned above, the conditioning itself is much more important in training skill in Iron Palm.

In both of these exercises, I suggest that you stick with natural foundational abdominal breathing, being sure to inhale deeply in to the lower abdomen and exhale by allowing the diaphragm to slowly return to its resting point; that is, do

not breathe with the chest. Inhale and exhale should be slow and steady through the nose in a natural rhythm that fits your body. A common cycle is breaths lasting six seconds; three seconds on the inhale and three on the exhale. Many systems of martial arts use this breathing cycle. Relax while you breathe, allowing your structure to support you and seek to bring your body to a state of content silence. Relaxation is key...

Lastly, many would have you believe that Qigong done incorrectly can be harmful. While this notion is mostly unsubstantiated, I have been privy to witness an individual faint during a Qigong exercise that required a good deal of bending over. This individual fainted, fell over and hit his head on the floor, causing the initiation of a seizure. It is therefore worth mentioning that if you plan to partake in Qigong exercises, it would be worthwhile to show the exercises to your doctor and personal trainer if you have one, and make sure they feel comfortable with the motions you will be performing. They may have some medical reason, (low Blood pressure, epilepsy, etc.), that they feel should restrain you from certain types of motions or exercise. If this is the case, it would be germane to discuss with them your intent to perform Iron Palm training and get cleared for such a practice.

Standing Meditation

Many Qigong programs start with the student simply standing. The practice of standing, often called Zhan Zhuang, is seen as an important method of meditating; the first step in the process of becoming more in touch with what is taking place within your body, what feels comfortable and what does not, and what physiological and mental processes are taking place as you become more adept with standing meditation. In addition, an emphasis should be placed on relaxation and focusing on proper body posture in order to dictate structure.



Performing Standing Meditation with natural posture

If you are not familiar with the details of Standing Meditation, it may be worthwhile to seek out a source of Qigong instruction. Contrary to the views of some teachers, I feel that standing meditation is not a remotely dangerous practice in and of itself, but there can be a number of details, (from posture to mental imaging, etc.), that will allow you to glean the most from your time.

Energy Ball

The first method I introduce here works quite well, regardless of whether you have done standing meditation practice or not. Just like the standing meditation exercises above, it will be familiar to those who have had time training in Tai Chi Chuan. In the version of the exercise presented here, the hands start at the sides. With eyes closed, become aware of your posture. Make sure you are standing up straight with good posture, with the knees slightly bent and the body at ease; hands down at the sides and in a relaxed, docile state with the heels together and toes rotated slightly exterior.

From this position, take one step. (some systems say it must be performed with a certain foot, but it really does not matter), so that you are now standing shoulder-width apart or slightly more. Maintain a slight bend in the knees, relax

the back and sink into your stance. Slowly raise your hands up in front of you, consciously making a point to keep the shoulders and elbows in a sunken position. As the hands rise up, the fingers will come together, creating a circle with your arms, (like a large basketball hoop). In some traditions, the middle fingers should be horizontal to one another and fingertips just barely separated. These details are of less importance than the actual mental process.



Performing Energy Ball Qigong exercise

The focus here from a general perspective is to feel as if you are holding a ball of energy and that this ball is radiating energy in to your being, providing voltage for the orbiting flow of energy. It is a health and longevity exercises meant for the entire body. Our purpose here is to focus on the hands. Thus, imagine this ball of energy charging your upper body from the tip of the head down the shoulders and arms, and finally into the hands. As you inhale with natural abdominal breathing, allow the energy to be collected from this sphere and consolidated in the dan tien, magnifying in intensity as the energy grows. As you exhale, focus on pushing this up your body and into your hands. Try to feel your hands pulsate and grow in volume as this intangible energy penetrates the tissues and fascia of your hands and they fill with increased supplies of fresh Blood. Be cognizant of the heaviness of the hands, the degree of heat you feel, and if you can feel a pulse in your hand. Over time, you will become more aware of many things inside your body.

Mentally, you can focus on the movement of energy by correlating this movement with beams of light, liquid such as Blood, or even fire, especially in the winter time when it is colder.

With some work, you may also consider focusing on each finger. With effort and time, one option is to focus on the thumbs, breathing into them from both sides for three full breaths, then moving on to the index fingers, middle fingers, fore fingers, and finally the pinkies. This can be done with or without the standard usage. The feeling of increased circulation should be felt in each finger individually as you are performing the exercise. This is more subtle and makes time pass more quickly if qigong is boring to you.

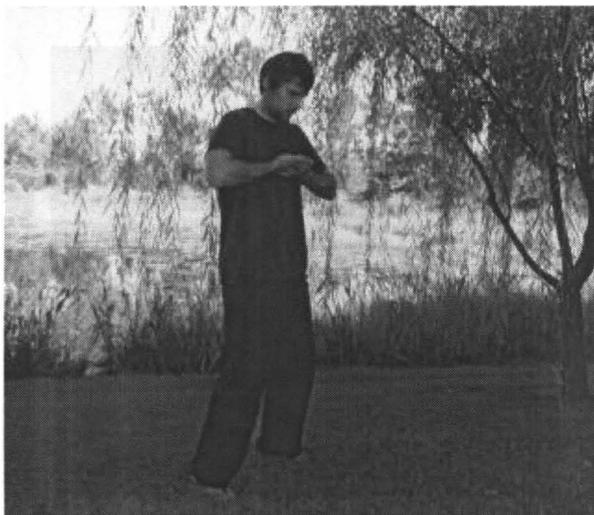
While these types of exercises will not increase your prowess in Iron Palm, they are good for longevity and they do help to some degree with the healing process. It is a simple matter of teaching your brain to consciously control circulation in a minor way to various parts of the body. The type of Qigong exercise you actually use is of less importance; the mental action is more so. But put in a significant amount of time, and you will begin to have an appreciation for this type of exercise, despite its lack of martial design.

After several minutes or longer, conclude your standing meditation by slowly lowering your arms back to your sides and opening your eyes if they are closed.

Pressing the Sky

Pressing or Pushing the Sky is a basic Qigong exercise that can be found in a number of Qigong programs. Pressing the Sky combines the mental processes as seen in standing meditation as well as physical movement to help create circulation. I offer it here because it seems to offer good results for most people who try it and it is a simple but universal exercise that can be transferred to most any system of study. It is not unique or esoteric. It just works.

To perform Pressing the Sky, first begin with a shoulder-width stance, hands on the navel. Place the palms up, one on top of another on the dan tien. This is the beginning posture. Slowly rotate the palms outwardly, (away from your body in front of you), as you “press” the hands upwards. The wrists should be biomechanically comfortable, allowing the palms to face completely upwards again about the time your hands reach the height of your head or higher. As your arms come

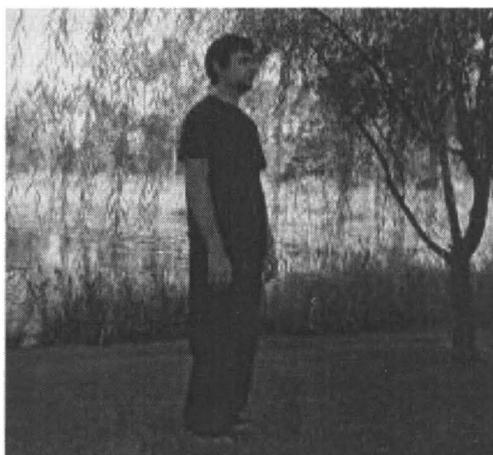
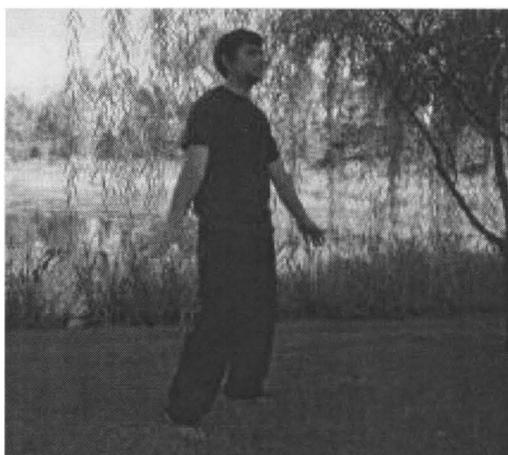


to a fully extended state with the palms facing up, stretch upward, attempting to extend your body as much as possible. In some martial circles, the heels would be raised off the ground as well. This is not necessary. During this phase of the exercise, one should be slowly inhaling to maximum capacity while feeling the breath and energy flowing downward and collecting at the dan tien point.



Left: Palms beginning to rotate outward as hands rise.
Right: Palms at their mix height with body outstretched

From this extended position, slowly separate the palms from each other and allow them to lower slowly, coming down from the sides rather than the front. Slowly release the breath, (exhale), and feel the circulation move out to the hands as they slowly lower below the heart. As the hands approach the side of the body, sweep them inward again, allowing the palms to overlap each other once again until they are in the beginning position.



Returning to the starting position

Initially, your patience may only allow for 10 or 20 repetitions of this movement. If you want to incorporate Qigong into your Iron Palm training, start with this and increase the number of repetitions by 10 each week until you are performing the desired amount. Some may have the goal of pressing the sky 100 times before or after each training session, and others prefer to measure time rather than repetitions. It's all up to you; either is fine. A full 100 repetitions is a very large amount and a number closer to 25 is probably more appropriate.

I feel confident that this is all the Qigong that is ever needed for Iron Palm training. Performing classical sets such as Yi Jin Jing, Ba Duan Jin, Six Healing Sounds, or other hard or soft Qigong routines, as well as basic calisthenics such as the traditional Snake Turns Over can be added to your program if you see fit; they provide something fresh and new to keep things interesting, but they are not required.

For additional resources, please see Appendix II for listings of appropriate follow-on Qigong reading material.

TRAINING TO BREAK WITH PATHOLOGY IN MIND

“Boards do not hit back” is a well-known quote from Bruce Lee in his famous movie, *Enter the Dragon*, which illustrates that breaking does not equate to fighting skill. Perhaps now is a good time to go back to the beginning of this book and read the first few paragraphs. Iron Palm, and any conditioning for that matter, is just that. It is conditioning. We should make sure there is no illusion as to this fact. Conditioning is conditioning and one small piece of a larger puzzle. Using the Iron Palm training successfully in a confrontation is dependant on your ability to utilize combative skills that are trained in your chosen martial art.

With this in mind, breaking is actually quite an important facet of your Iron Palm training. Not only is it useful as a measurement in testing the level of your skills, but it is also useful in overcoming mental obstacles and becoming accustomed to striking hard surfaces, akin to areas like the skull or sternum.

While some practitioners only break on rare occasion, I feel it is important to break on a normal basis. For as much work as one spends on the conditioning itself, the ultimate goal is to issue force, and it is through breaking that one becomes accustomed with this activity.

Once you have been training solidly for a number of months and have worked your way up to hitting gravel, it is not a bad idea to directly strike a capstone, (no towel), a handful of times following your normal training session once per week or however often you feel comfortable. Initially, strikes should be performed with only minimal power production until the strike feels comfortable and solid, focusing primarily on the body connection and developing a smooth united flow. As you become more comfortable striking a bare capstone and aware of your body method, increase power production slowly over the course of several weeks until you are striking the capstone at what feels to be close to maximum power. This training can be a bit harsh on the hand, so remember to

only embark on this type of training no more frequently than once per week and no more than maybe five palm slaps, give or take a few.

As you become more adept at striking a concrete block, consider how your system goes about breaking. While some systems use a linear slap, most iron palm systems develop a whipping type of power, akin to cracking a whip. Work at producing the whole-body connection that incorporates a whipping type of power originating in the legs or waist and ending in the hands when you slap the block. In simplest terms, this is the power generation exercise.

It may be germane to begin your slapping of the capstone with some cushion on top. A small stack of paper works well, as does a thin cloth laid flat on the block. The use of paper for breaking is discussed in a bit more detail in this chapter. Keep in mind the maxim stated in the next section on “Dealing with Injury,” with regard to stopping your training due to injury: If you become injured and the injury does not get better as time passes, you are best off to stop if necessary. Lesson learned: Progression cannot be rushed.

Slapping the capstone with a great deal of force can obviously cause damage to the hand more readily than the relaxed conditioning, so it is important to understand the pathological ramifications of this and the treatment methods that are most effective following capstone work. While slapping with force, the bones of the hand are stressed a great deal. This is why it is important to move forward on capstone work slowly and only after several months to a year or more of solid conditioning has been completed. Bone bruises and soreness at the joints may show up with improperly or immaturely performed strikes. Additionally, the hard flat blocks can create a good deal of sting on the surface of the hand. The skin will redden and potentially bruise from impact.

While a good Iron Palm Jow can be used following your regular session and prior to the capstone striking, it is probably more suitable to follow-up the capstone striking with a cool or slightly warm but strong liniment with a high concentration of injury herbs that clear Heat and strongly invigorates the Blood. This will aid in reducing inflammation from impact and removing any Blood stasis from bruising. PlumDragon Southern Fist Iron Body Jow works well for this purpose, as does the Dit Da Jow liniment I will discuss in the next couple sections. Ultimately, any liniment will work well following capstone work, as long as it is of a cooler energy and is very effective at dispelling stasis.

Internally, we want to stay the course here as usual. Teapills such as Gecko Tonic will help the kidneys deal with the extra stress put on the bones and joints, while Great Mender can aid in healing if you walk away from slapping the capstone with any bruising. Iron Bone Training Powder works well for this purpose, especially when modified. Once you begin slapping a capstone, you

can add the following ingredients to increase the ability of this recipe to deal with stasis and inflammation in the exterior layers of the hand:

- 20 grams Yu Jin
- 20 grams Chi Shao
- 20 grams Mu Dan Pi
- Increase Dang Shen and Shu Di to 30 grams

Yu Jin, Chi Shao, and Mu Dan Pi are all cold herbs that help invigorate the Blood. Dang Shen and Shu Di are increased to help the body produce more Qi and Blood—It takes Blood to move Blood.

The first of these three herbs adhere to the principle of clearing, while the Dang Shen and Shu Di Huang adhere to the principle of tonifying, or building.

Using Paper to Break

Once you've been striking the capstone for some time, you will begin to come close to producing enough power to break the block without damaging your hand. As you approach this benchmark some months down the road, paper can be a handy tool in helping you break down the mental barrier that can sometimes keep you from releasing that last bit of power necessary to accomplish the break. In some public videos, the breaker is seen with a phone book or ream of paper on top of the brick to be broken. While a small amount of energy is dissipated as the shock wave travels through the paper on its way to the concrete, using paper in this way is a useful handicap which modifies the situation so that one can break a block easier. There are two reasons for this:

Cushion: With paper, the chance of injury and the mentally debilitating sting from impact are reduced, allowing one to slap the brick with every last bit of power they can muster.

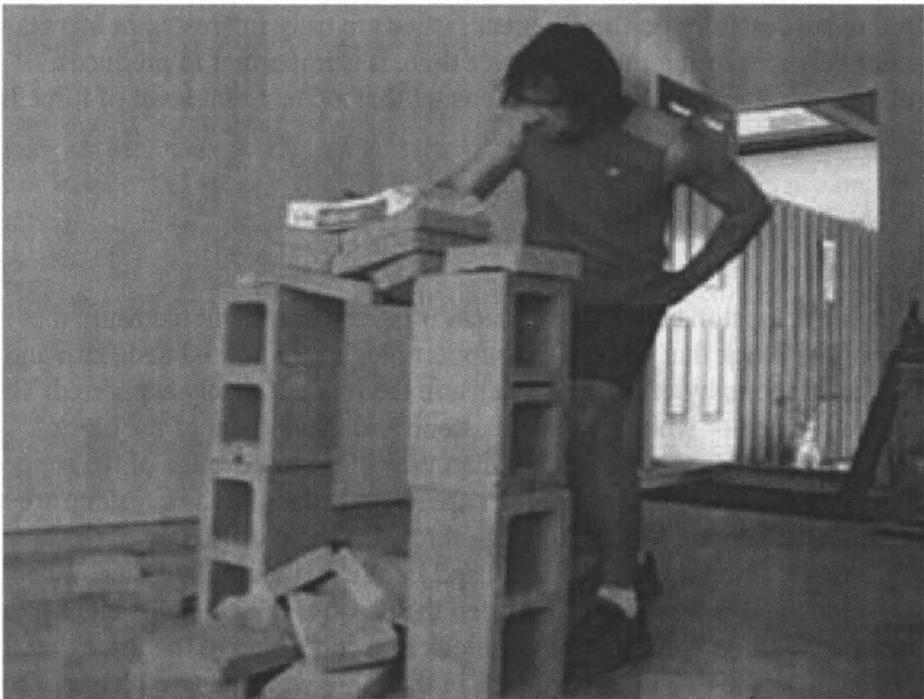
Mechanical Pressure Advantage: When your hand strikes the paper, the stack is compressed in an inverted conical shape. As the compression moves down through the paper, the energy transfer becomes focused into smaller and smaller concentric rings within the hand print. What this equates to is a higher pressure differential at the surface of the brick, resulting in an easier break.

When you feel you have gained some proficiency in slapping the capstone with force, you can start using paper by supporting a capstone between cinder blocks stacked to the waist, as if you were going to attempt to break it. Place one ream

of paper, (500 sheets), on top of the capstone and attempt the break. You may be surprised with a successful break, requiring less force.

A single ream of paper is equivalent to about two inches in height, depending on the quality/thickness of the paper being used. This is a good starting point when trying to overcome a breaking barrier. It will provide a decent bit of padding and it makes the break noticeably easier.

Once you can break a capstone each and every time with the ream of paper atop your block or blocks, remove half an inch of paper and work with this amount until you can again perform the same feat. When you have approximately half an inch of total paper remaining, the break will require approximately the same force to break the block as if there was no paper at all, but the paper will still provide some cushion for your hand. However, just the sight of paper can provide some mental “ego” to exist, making the break slightly easier mentally, as opposed to having no paper at all.



Breaking three concrete blocks (6” of concrete) with a full ream of paper on top

Paper can actually act as a great tool, which comes in handy in early stages of training for breaking single blocks, and on up through multiple blocks and with selective breaking. Each time you add an extra block and attempt to break, you have just added nearly two full inches of concrete of difficulty, creating a very

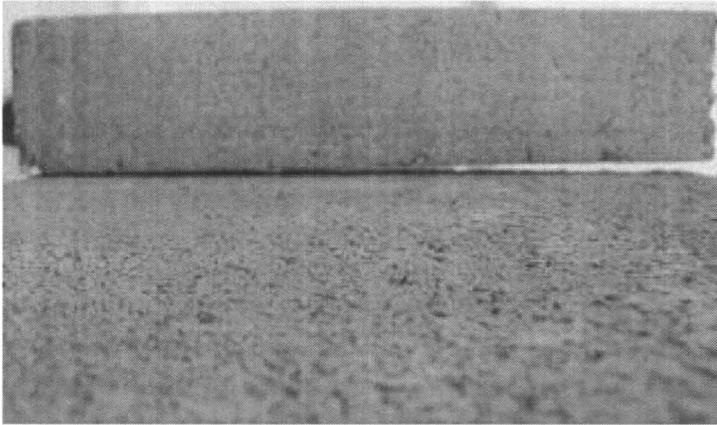
large “stepping stone” in skill. Thus, it can be difficult to measure progress as you gain skill in power development. For example, breaking two un-spaced blocks is approximately twice as difficult, (slightly more, actually). Imagine cutting your time in half on the 100-yard dash! Paper can act as a device for providing you with smaller stepping stones to a larger goal, slicing your progression into smaller, progressive, and more manageable pieces. It also allows you to do several breaks and work on power production while mitigating the risk of injuring your hand.

Setting up a Break

It is clear at this point that this book is not a tutorial on Iron Palm practices. It is an in-depth work of reference material for the Iron Palm practitioner. Nevertheless, it is important to break the scope of the book momentarily and cover some important details about setting up a break. I believe that these details are often overlooked and very difficult to find in current-day literature or instruction, and greatly reduce the consistency of force and the necessary skill required to successfully perform a break. If we are truly interested in increasing and accurately measuring our skills over time, it is important to produce a controlled environment where we can ensure that a consistent level of force is necessary to break as often as possible.

Ground and Flush

When laying a capstone down for a break, it is very important to ensure that the surfaces of the block that contact the support blocks are ground and flush and overlap the supports by at least ½” to ensure the block is safely supported. There should be no space or wobble in the capstone and the corners of the block should be decisively supported rather than very close to the edge of the supports. If there is any space or gaps where the corners and edges of the capstone are not snug against the support blocks, this can throw off the consistency of the break; in some cases making it more difficult, and in others, making it easier. When the block is struck and there is space between the capstone and support blocks, the capstone may collide with the support block and contribute to the force that the block must dissipate due to this contact, in the same way that two pieces of rock break when slammed into each other. Alternatively, striking a block like this causes the lines of wave travel to run diagonal to the block as opposed to sideways. This can make the break more difficult. Ultimately, easier or harder, it’s a “fudged factor” we want to mitigate.



Improperly set up block

In the above picture, the space on this supported break causes the block to act differently than if it were not flush. This is especially worrisome on breaks that are flat on the ground. If there is any space in the middle or at the edges of a break being performed flat on the ground, it will be drastically easier to break and will act more like a block that is supported on stands, (because in fact it is supported, but only by a very small gap).

There are a number of videos on YouTube that show an obvious space between the blocks. Some are so blatant that the breaker's fingers can be seen propping up one edge of the block. Then at the point of impact, the fingers are moved so that the block is allowed to slam into its supports below and magically, the bricks are broken. These breaks are questionable.

Temperature and Dampness

Concrete blocks are quite porous and affected by the rise and fall of temperature and humidity. A standard 8" x 16" x 2" capstone should be noticeably more difficult to break as the weather cools off. Be careful when breaking blocks in the winter time when it is very cold and your hands are colder. Take mental note of this as you break during the summer months. Compare your breaking ability from summer to summer or winter to winter rather than from four months back up to now.

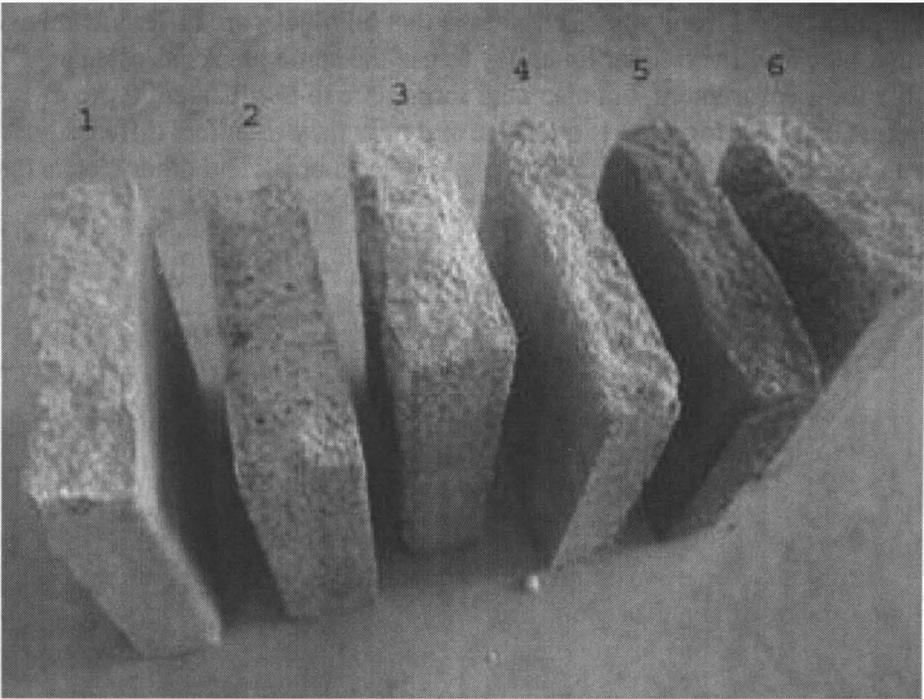
Additionally, concrete that is allowed to sit in rain or moisture may soak up some moisture. This will make the block more difficult to break and may increase discomfort. If you have wet capstones, allow them to sit and dry out before attempting to break them. You should not bake them but rather let them air dry naturally. Again, we want to control as many variables as possible so that we can consistently and accurately calculate the increase in ability.

Mixing Process

Different blocks have different levels of water, different substrate, aggregate, and varying levels of chemical additives. Some blocks get weakened from vibration during transport and other blocks may actually get harder as they are allowed to sit and cure further. Some blocks have little aggregate or may be flimsy or brittle, while others are produced to be very dense structures that are nearly impossible to break. Make every attempt to obtain all of your blocks from the same source at the same time. If you get your capstones from Home Depot, you should always get your capstones from Home Depot, preferably right after the arrival of a new shipment. This will ensure the most consistent strength of the blocks you purchase.

There are red blocks that seem to be more clay-like, which are easier to break than the standard gray blocks. There are also red blocks that are harder to break, which seem to be a darker shade of red. Some gray blocks are cut in half, (half-caps), and are used as 4" x 16" x 2," which are substantially easier than the basic 8" wide blocks. Some people prefer coconuts, (which range in difficulty), and others prefer the more easily broken scalloped blocks which have half-moons on one side, commonly used in garden settings. Even still, others prefer to use blocks that have indentations on one side of the block. Some might see these as "cheater" blocks because they break easily along the indentions along the bottom of the block. These as well as the half-caps, which have been sawed in half, are often used in demos for their breaking ease. Lastly, wood is also a material that can be used. If you are at a point where you recently are capable to break one patio block, try your luck with three or four one-inch pine boards. In some locales capstones may not be available, in which case wood becomes a possible option.

While the intent of demonstrating a break with some of these easier materials is in question, the fact of the matter is that it doesn't much matter which material you decide to work with. They are *all* acceptable. Ultimately, if you can obtain the easy scalloped or indented blocks cheaper than the standard gray blocks, you may be better off simply breaking those and using these to gauge your progress. The steps from one to two and to three un-spaced blocks will come faster with easier blocks, and this isn't necessarily a bad thing as long as you are honest with yourself and others about what you are breaking. If you are charting your progress, make absolutely certain that you break with the same material consistently. If you are just having fun, go out and be creative with what you break.



Six blocks in order of degree of difficulty; #1 was the hardest to break, #6 the easiest.

The above six blocks were produced using different mechanisms in the mixing process. Some were thicker while others were produced with softer or harder materials. Some red blocks are made from a more clayish type of material and some are red-dyed concrete. Likewise, some had been “shaken” to remove air bubbles during the drying stages and in the process created a harder, denser block that may even appear thinner. Others have greater amounts of aggregate inside, though this was perhaps the least significant of the reasons contributing to the difficulty of these blocks. And finally, I have found “coupon blocks” in some towns. Coupon blocks are 6” wide blocks, (as opposed to 8”), which have been cut off the end of other concrete forms and are often simply discarded by concrete yards. This process produces a block that is nice and flat on one side and very rough on the other. The thinnest and thickest part of each coupon block is different and it can drastically define how easy or hard it is to break. Some coupon blocks are easier than a standard capstone and some are significantly more difficult.

Blocks #3 and #6 are both coupon blocks. Notice the inconsistent surface on one side. Block #3 was noticeably harder than a standard gray concrete capstone, but block #6 was the easiest of the bunch, due to an indent toward the middle of the block that made its weakest point quite weak. As a result, it broke at this weakest point, several inches off from the center of the block.

The point to be had from this discussion is that all blocks are different and even the same block will vary over time. Try to use the same blocks as often as possible for measurement, but also take some time to try different types of concrete. Get a feel for what is out there and how they each feel differently. You will run into blocks that are unbelievably simple to break and other blocks that are unbelievably hard to break.

DEALING WITH INJURY

Even with all the concepts of disharmony in mind and a well-followed and designed training regimen, well produced Iron Palm Jow and other herbal adjuncts, injury –be it minor or major– is inevitable for most people training this type of conditioning. Fortunately, there are many roads one can take in dealing with the injury and getting back to training.

The single best way to deal with training injuries is to get plenty of quality sleep, properly hydrate your self, and provide necessary nutrients to the body so that injuries are much less frequent and if they do occur, recovery time is greatly reduced. As mentioned previously, the continual use of high-quality nutritional products, (www.dr-michael-neeley.usana.com), is the best vitamin supplement to optimize your overall health and help prevent disease and damage to the body. While they are not specific to Iron Palm, a good vitamin supplement can aid greatly if you are not able to maintain a very good diet or use internal herbal formulas specific to Iron Palm.

Injuries from Iron Palm-related training can be some of the most frustrating injuries to deal with. Not only can it be painful and annoying, but it generally means that one must discontinue from training until the injury is fully healed. Acupuncture is very helpful at speeding the healing process, reducing inflammation, and increasing Blood flow to the injured site. Reference the previous section on acupuncture for relevant options. The Qigong routines discussed earlier can also be useful to employ during an injury.

Concentrated grape seed extract also works very well as an anti-inflammatory agent. Pineapple has some minor ability to reduce inflammation in the body as well. Omega-3 fatty acids found in fish oil are incredibly helpful at repairing nerve tissue damage, in addition to other positive benefits outside of working with injuries. Your dietician can provide you with a wealth of these types of factoids.

Training through Injuries

While some injuries may be simple superficial bruises, other times an injury from Iron Palm training can develop much deeper in the hand, perhaps at a joint, or in a tendon where Blood flow is generally lower, and hence healing takes place more slowly. This can be accompanied by reduced range of motion, weakness, pain, and swelling. Furthermore, because it is such a specific activity, injury usually means training must be halted completely until the injury has had time to thoroughly heal. For those of us who are steadfast in our once-daily or twice-daily training routines and take it very seriously, this can be a difficult task!

Should You Stop?

If the injury gets worse with training, discontinue immediately. If the injury is noticeably improving each day, then continue cautiously.

If you are dealing with an injury due to Iron Palm training and you are training your strikes properly, remember that the most likely reason for the injury is overtraining. Iron Palm is not a sprint to the finish line. It is a marathon that can take a life time. Pace yourself, and for the sake of your hands, don't be afraid to slow down your progression a little bit once you get over your injury. Progression is the key to continuing steady development and keeping the body from a plateau. But listen to your body and make absolutely sure you are ready before you increase the number of strikes, change to a new medium, or vary your training methodology.

I usually find that following a sufficiently serious injury, vacation, or other circumstance in which I am forced to discontinue training for two or more days, I often resume morning and afternoon sessions to find that I receive minor injuries for the first couple days or so that I am back at it. This will especially be true for those who spend any time striking material directly. It is almost as if the hands realize they no longer need to be constantly in a mode of healing and building and they decide to go on vacation with me. Like someone who is mentally whisked away by their escapade vacation on the beaches of Hawaii with their family, it is hard for those hands to buckle down and get back to work.

When you do in fact take time off from training, restart your training slowly, even if you've only been away from your bag for a couple days. Traditionally, you would be expected to start over entirely, only performing the minimal

number of strikes each day and build again slowly. While it is not necessary to increase at the same slow rate that you did back when you started, you may consider starting with a minimal number of strikes and if your hand feels good the next morning, add 10 strikes each day until you are back at your usual level. The conditioning will still take effect, so remember that it should not be rushed.

Arsenal against Injury

Time off from Iron Palm training due to injury can be drastically reduced with the use of external and internal herbal formulas. Getting additional rest, performing Qigong, continuing to apply Dit Da Jow or Iron Palm Jow, and basic range of motion exercises can also be of great help. Rest is debatably the most important and overlooked component of healing in our society today. Getting enough sleep is absolutely paramount, not only for the proper healing of injuries and the proper operation of the body when performing in an activity like martial arts and Iron Palm, but it also is of important concern for an individual's mental and psychological faculties. And again, providing necessary nutrients to the body through internal training wines and nutritional supplements is vital for overall optimal health and physical performance, as well as shortening injury recovery times and preventing injuries from being so extreme.

As discussed earlier, an important internal product for the healing of injuries is Jin Gu Die Shang Wan, known in its English Patent name as Great Mender. This formulation is available through a variety of labels and companies. At PlumDragon, we prefer the PlumFlower line for their clean and well-made products. While I presented Great Mender as an Iron Palm adjunct earlier, its primary production purpose is for treatment of injury. Great Mender Dit Da Wan Teapills are a fairly comprehensive formula that does a good job of aiding the body in healing from the inside out. Using Great Mender at the dosage given on the bottle for three or four days can greatly accelerate the healing rate of the injury. Coupled with continued application of a good Dit Da Jow during the injury, this is all most people will need for basic injuries sustained from Iron Palm training, to include minor bruising or mild soreness in the hand and joints. As with all teapills, there is no real taste so consumer compliance is usually high, but these items are not nearly as strong as whole herbs decocted into a liquid tea.

For those interested in pursuing more powerful solutions for more severe injuries, we can look to decocting herbs into a tea and drinking them. Decoctions are inherently stronger and work at a deeper therapeutic level. So, while decoctions of tea are significantly stronger in action than the same formula made into teapills, these weaker teapills do not taste nearly as objectionable and it can be difficult for some people to stomach some herbal teas.

The below recipe is a modification of an old classical Dit Da wan recipe. This recipe focuses more on bone injury than the smaller classical version. While some of the herbs in this recipe are not as powerful as some of the stronger herbs in Great Mender, when it is produced as a tea or wine it should produce a similar and possibly stronger effect than a patent teapill.

The measurements and adjoining directions are written specifically to provide you enough tea to take for one injury. To make this formula as a wine rather than tea, simply age the ingredients in one gallon of vodka or whiskey. You may consider doubling the dosages of each herb for this purpose.

Dit Da Wan Base

Dang Gui – 9 grams
Chuan Xiong – 9 grams
Xu Duan – 6 grams
Gu Sui Bu – 6 grams
Yu Jin – 6 grams
Ru Xiang – 6grams
Mo Yao – 6 grams
San Qi – 6 grams
Xue Jie – 6 grams
Ma Bian Cao – 6 grams
Shu Di Huang – 3 grams
Sheng Di Huang – 3 grams
Fu Ling – 3 grams

Mix these herbs with $\frac{3}{4}$ gallon of water in a non-metallic pot, bring to a boil and reduce to a simmer. Allow to simmer for 45 minutes. While most of the herbs don't need to be ground, it is very important that San Qi be broken up and ground to expose the interior of the herb. This is a very hard root and adding it whole will drastically reduce its effect on the formula. One can consume $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of tea three times per day until the tea is gone to help accelerate the healing process.

These herbs can also be made into actual pills (wan) by finely grinding all herbs and adding 9-12 grams of honey. Kneading this mixture will eventually produce a type of doughy mash that can then be split up into three gram portions, wrapped in wax paper and cooked, or used immediately.

In this formula, Dang Gui invigorates the Blood and also has significant Blood tonifying properties. For those with strong constitution, Dang Gui Wei can be

used instead, or used in addition to Dang Gui. While Dang Gui Wei is mild, it will focus more on circulation and less on tonification. Chuan Xiong and the three resins help stimulate Blood flow to break stasis, heal injury, generate flesh, and reduce pain. Yu Jin, quite cold in nature, also invigorates the Blood to break stagnation but its cold nature balances this formula a bit more on the cooling end. Ma Bian Cao is only mild in its ability to increase circulation, but is cooling and supports the functions of other Blood invigorators. Xu Duan and Gu Sui Bu focus together on tonifying the Kidney meridian to heal and strengthen bone and sinew. They comprise the portion of this formula that can be said to focus on deeper injury. San Qi is an important herb with some interesting properties. While it strongly increases Blood flow to break stasis, it also has the uncanny effect of stopping bleeding. These two seemingly paradoxical actions are what make San Qi such an important and powerful herb.

Shu Di and Sheng Di are often used together in clinical settings. Shu Di is a great Blood tonic that is sometimes used to aid in the healing process with both injuries and sores. Sheng Di, the raw form of Shu Di, is a Heat-clearing herb that will provide some small benefit in reducing inflammation. With as many warmer herbs as there are in this formula, it's not a bad idea to have something to cool things off a bit. In this way, it will interact to a degree with Yu Jin, Ma Bian Cao, and Mo Yao to satisfy the function of clearing Heat and reducing inflammation. Lastly, Fu Ling is a type of fungus that helps support the function of the Spleen and reduces Dampness in the body. In this case, Dampness may present as swelling and inflammation, or congealed Blood at the site of injury.

For those who receive moderate to severe injuries during training, it is always important to see your healthcare provider, because they have the expertise to examine you and come to a clear conclusion about the details of your injury. I can only provide these formulas for you to take with you to your doctor or herbalist and clear their use with them.

In the instance of more severe injury, one may consider adding Hong Hua and Tao Ren to the previous formula, as well as Liu Ji Nu. Hong Hua and Tao Ren are a rather strong combination when combined, while Liu Ji Nu strongly invigorates the Blood and has additional functionality to open and unblock the channels. Yan Hu Suo can be added for very painful injuries, and if you want to focus the formula on the upper body, (since we are after all discussing Iron Palm!), Qiang Huo and Gui Zhi can be added. Bai Zhi can be used in this formula to aid in directing the formula farther out to the extremities and will have the added bonus of relieving pain as well. For the purpose of creating a formula that deals much more with pain, Yan Hu Suo and Bai Zhi should be combined. The blend of these two pain-killing herbs has been used for a very long time.

For stiff, painful, or weak joints, Wind-Damp herbs can be added. Qin Jiao and Wei Ling Xian are 2 very good herbs for dispelling Wind-Damp and opening the channels. Qin Jiao is also cooling and helps relax sinew. Shen Jin Cao is a warmer that is quite useful for opening the channels and relaxing sinew.

While some formulas include the use of stronger herbs such as San Leng, E Zhu, and Tu Bie Chong, (which is mildly toxic), this is generally not necessary for most injuries. The aforementioned formula with modifications discussed in the above paragraph, along with the proper external liniment, will heal all but the most serious of injuries up in record time. For the most serious of injuries, only add Tu Bie Chong, Shui Zhi, and San Leng/E Zhu and the like when discussed with your local doctor and under their direction. Regardless of lineage, these herbs will create among the strongest of internal injury formulas available. Nothing on the market will be stronger, nor would you want it to be!

For this reason, it is important to keep on hand a good Dit Da Jow, preferably one cooling Dit Da Jow for fresh bruising and injury, and one warmer, more moving jow for older or serious injuries that have had the inflammation reduced. Your Iron Palm Jow can be used for injuries on the upper portion of the body, but it is not optimized for healing of sustained injury like a bruise or injury liniment is.

For injuries that have pronounced inflammation, perhaps the best way to remove some of the inflammation is still San Huang San, or Three Yellow Powder. This item is a classic formula, discussed in other books and sold by several vendors. San Huang San is very effective at reducing pronounced inflammation. I have had some customers relieve serious inflammation overnight from broken bones and other more serious injuries, purely with the application of this little recipe. One customer in particular uses a liniment-based San Huang “jow” and swears that it is his go-to injury aid.

Rather than equal measurements of each herb, I prefer the following proportions. Externally, this does not make a large difference, but with injuries, it is important to accentuate the strong Blood invigorating properties of Da Huang a little bit. San Huang San is composed of the following herbs:

Da Huang – 18 grams
Huang Bai – 15 grams
Huang Qin – 15 grams

There exists several modified version of the San Huang San formula. One includes the addition of Pu Gong Ying, Hong Hua, and Zhi Zi. Other versions have used Mu Dan Pi, Huang Lian, Sheng Di, Pu Huang, and even Oolong or

Green Tea, (for their cooling and drying actions). Bottom line, you cannot go wrong with the original three yellows. The addition of Hong Hua will help with circulation and this is a worthwhile addition. Adding Tao Ren will help perpetuate the actions of Hong Hua.

Don't buy into the hype of secret versions of this formula. It is a basic and direct formula that works wonderfully as is or with the modifications previously mentioned. People claiming they use a special secret version are simply blowing smoke. The realm of mysticism and secrecy no longer has a place with herbal formulas, especially those as simple yet as important as San Huang San.

Regardless how you decide to make it, make sure the herbs are finely ground. Mix a small amount of the powder together with some warm olive oil or water and set aside until the herbs soak up the liquid and form a muddy consistency. Spread this over the injury and wrap loosely with a piece of saran wrap, followed by an ace bandage or tape, and allow the poultice to remain in place for a couple of hours, if possible. Some PlumDragon customers will leave this on overnight and wake up the next morning to an injury that no longer has any inflammation.

Did You Know?

San Huang San is composed of herbs that have very strong antibiotic functions. In Chinese medicine, antibiotics are seen as very cold, bitter substances that fight Heat in the form of infection. As such, San Huang San has internal uses that expand beyond that of injury. Herbs such as Huang Qin and Huang Lian are very cold and bitter and have been shown to counteract infections such as flu, strep throat, and staphylococcus infections. These herbs also have been used in the past for "toxic" Heat, such as the redness, pain, and inflammation from spider bites. Other very cold herbs in the same category of these herbs are often found in herbal remedies for Wind-Heat conditions.

Once the inflammation has been reduced following use of San Huang San, you can use the below Dit Da Jow formula, which is sufficient for most injuries shy of serious ailments and is designed to operate best on the upper part of the body. When this liniment is not strong enough, PlumDragon's Ho Family Jow or Bruise Juice may be necessary. The ingredients for a good injury Dit Da Jow are as follows:

Injury Dit Da Jow Base for Iron Palm Training

San Qi – 24 grams
Zi Ran Tong – 24 grams
Dang Gui – 24 grams
Ru Xiang – 24 grams
Mo Yao – 24 grams
Gui Zhi – 24 grams
Ding Xiang – 24 grams
Hong Hua – 18 grams
Tao Ren – 18 grams
Da Huang – 18 grams
Ban Xia – 18 grams
Jiang Huang – 18 grams
Bai Jie Zi – 18 grams
Chen Pi – 18 grams
Bo He – 12 grams
Mu Dan Pi – 12 grams
Zhi Zi – 12 grams
Huang Qin – 12 grams

Notice that two of the herbs from San Huang San appear in this formula. Huang Bai is absent, but in its stead is Zhi Zi. Additionally, Bo He and Mu Dan Pi are cooling herbs that help fight inflammation and pain.

Add the above herbs to approximately one gallon of vodka or whiskey and allow to age in a dark place for at least three months before use. Six months of aging is preferable. Alternatively, you can also combine the herbs with one half gallon of Everclear and one half gallon of boiling water. The heat from the water will spur the initial breakdown of the herbs and aid somewhat in the aging process. However, some of the herbs in this formula contain fragile essential oils that can be destroyed with too much heat. Adding hot water/alcohol is acceptable; cooking or boiling the herbs is not! Also, be cautious when adding hot water to glass jars. A large temperature differential may crack the glass.

Operating best on the upper body, this formula has a decent mix of warming and cooling herbs and overall, is on the warm side energetically. It will assist the body in mildly cooling the effected region and removing inflammation, while increasing local circulation to drive out stagnation. Pain will be reduced as a result and healing rate will be increased. San Qi will stop bleeding while concurrently invigorating the Blood and Chen Pi will act to properly regulate circulation and dry dampness at the site of injury.

To concentrate more on bone, Xu Duan and/or Gu Sui Bu are always good herbs to include. Vinegar-fried Long Gu would also be a good addition. Frying this herb allows the calcium to extract. For very serious injuries with bruising, consider the addition of Tu Bie Chong or processed Ma Qian Zi if there is soreness in the hands or in the joints. These herbs are toxic, so exercise great care in keeping them away from cuts or scrapes, mucous membranes such as the nose and mouth, and never, ever ingest this or any Dit Da Jow recipe that is made for external use. Additionally, it is always important to visit your healthcare professional when you feel you have a serious injury.

The above mentioned formula is best when used for injuries that tend to exhibit more pronounced stasis than anything else, such as bruising in the layers of muscle or skin, or even deeper at the bone. For injuries that feel deeper and affect the joints more or produce a dull aching feeling, you can modify the formula to include Wei Ling Xian, Mu Gua, and/or Qiang Huo. Mu Gua works best on the lower body when used internally, but it combines very nicely with Wei Ling Xian to treat Wind-Damp ailments. Qiang Huo works very well on the upper body. Qin Jiao and Shen Jin Cao are additions that can be made which will help relax the sinews while still treating Wind-Damp ailments. Adding Qian Nian Jian will help with these achy types of blockages while also helping to strengthen bone. As mentioned before, Qian Nian Jian makes a suitable substitute for Hu Gu (Tiger Bone) due to its ability to dispel Wind-Damp pain and strengthen bone and sinew.

Alternatively, if the primary complaint of the injury is soreness or tightness, or there is a combination of bruising and joint pain, etc., then a strong Iron Palm Jow, (as defined earlier), would also be prudent.

While applying this or any liniment, take some care as to how vigorously you rub the liniment into the skin. While rubbing can help break up stagnant Blood, fresh new injuries may become re-injured if rubbing is too vigorous. The older the injury is, the better the chance that a hard, deep massage will not disrupt the healing that has already taken place.

Plasters and Poultices

At PlumDragon, we prefer the use of certain plasters and poultices at certain times. While commercially produced plasters are not as strong as a well-made Dit Da Jow, they are clean, more convenient, usually inexpensive, and have a longer overall effect. For fresh new injuries that are hot to the touch, I enjoy the use of Wu Yang Pain Relieving Plasters. I always pack these with me for my trips to the Philippines because they are travel-friendly and can be worn during

long training sessions. They provide good anti-inflammatory action and decent stasis removal.

For injuries that are no longer as inflamed and require a good deal of movement, or for joints that are achy, I employ the use of Hua Tuo Extra Strength Plasters. They have an incredibly effective adhesive surface that can stay on for 24 hours easily without falling off. While I don't personally use 701 plasters, these are also quite effective and have been used for years in Dit Da.

Generally, I don't recommend the use of poultices as they are messier and often people have negative comments in this regard. If you would like to use a poultice, simply pulverize the old herbs from your favorite batch of Dit Da Jow with an immersion blender and add some finely powdered Xue Jie until the mixture takes on a thick and muddy consistency. Some traditions prefer the use of Song Xiang or Er Cha over Xue Jie, it makes little difference. This can be applied to the skin and covered with bandage and is quite effective. It does, however, take additional time. What may be easier is to simply saturate a cotton ball or cloth with Dit Da Jow and loosely tape down to the affected area. What is most important is that the area is covered from air and allowed to remain in constant contact with the herbal mash.

Ultimately, dealing with injuries is usually fairly straight forward once you are familiar with the treatment modalities. You must first identify what the cause is of the pain; is it bruising, or is it soreness in the joints? Does the pain radiate sharply or is it dull? That is, perhaps the biggest and easier questions to answer are, is the injury an issue of Blood stasis or of Wind-Damp Bi blockage? We now know that both of these methods are of a clearing nature. Also, is there residual inflammation that must be removed before applying more aggressive healing liniments? Because the herbs, (and aforementioned liniments), are categorized in the same jargon as the questions above, it is an easy riddle to decipher. Once the clearing is performed, tonification usually follows.

For internal formulas, we have already presented valuable herbal mixtures that will provide the best benefit on the upper part of the body, and namely, in the hands. The full formulas referenced earlier are all safe and non-toxic. Nevertheless, it's always important to discuss the use of internal formulas with your local healthcare professional.

From the above material, you are now armed with several important steps in identifying which formula to use and how to modify and use it. The hardest part of dealing with an injury is remaining consistent with your treatment and keeping from re-injuring yourself from training before you are fully recovered. Keep that in mind as you heal up!

APPLYING THE IRON PALM

There are as many thoughts on applying an Iron Palm strike as there are systems. Below are a few ideas on Iron Palm applications. Some schools of thought will approach Iron Palm striking as a vertically sweeping strike while others view it horizontally. Some may even consider both. There is merit in both of these methods.

This section is primarily for those who haven't considered or been shown the opposing perspective. For those who have seen only one perspective, it may be worthwhile to investigate the use of the additional methods presented here.

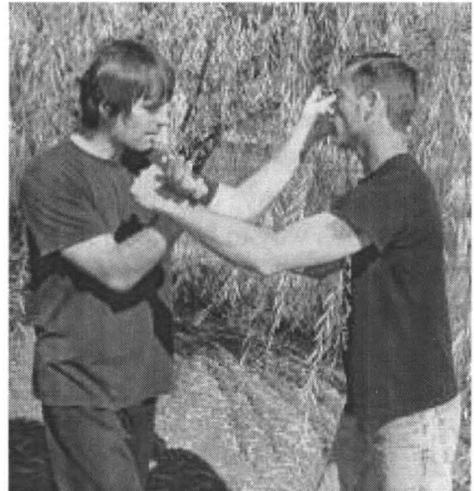
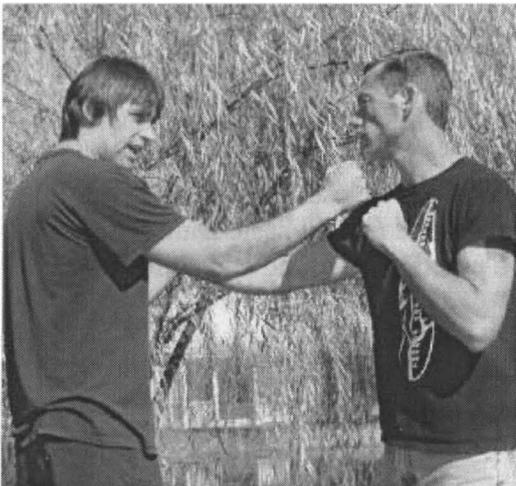
Some pictorial examples of these applications are given with an explanation in the proceeding sections. It should be noted that these are merely examples of a vast number of ways that the iron palm strike can be used. But it must be trained in this way to be useful in combat. While mostly basic hand positions have been shown below, they still require practice in timing and control for successful use.

Horizontally Sweeping Attack

The horizontal Iron Palm strike is one which moves horizontally towards your "victim." This is unquestionably the most common view taken on applying the strike and many people work to produce Iron Palm skills by striking vertically on a bag and then attempt to translate those skills to the horizontal direction by a more advanced set of exercises, including work on a hanging bag as well as partnered drills. Often times, the power generation changes due to this reorientation. The latisimus dorsi muscles are not employed in a similar fashion and waist rotation becomes a much larger and more important component to power production. The end result is that power built for this type of strike must be trained in this new direction.

When performing horizontally sweeping Iron Palm strikes, there are a few key points to keep in mind:

- This strike is not used in high frequency like a jab; it is a fight ender. Short-power Iron Palm strikes can be used in higher frequency as a setup for the long-throw Iron Palm, which has an emphasis on whipping power.
- Many systems perform concurrent attack and defense. The trade-off with a well executed, powerful Iron Palm strike is that it has a bit of wind up; it is somewhat telegraphed. Therefore, an initial blow to “stun” the opponent is often the best time to administer a good horizontally sweeping Iron Palm strike. Naturally, as you increase your skill level, the amount of telegraphing performed in the strike will diminish.
- This strike can have a trajectory in either a straight-forward direction or, in the case that you evasively step to the side of your opponent; it may come from the side as well.
- Good targets to aim for are the jaw line, the side of the face, the chest, and in instances where it is feasible, the stomach or groin.



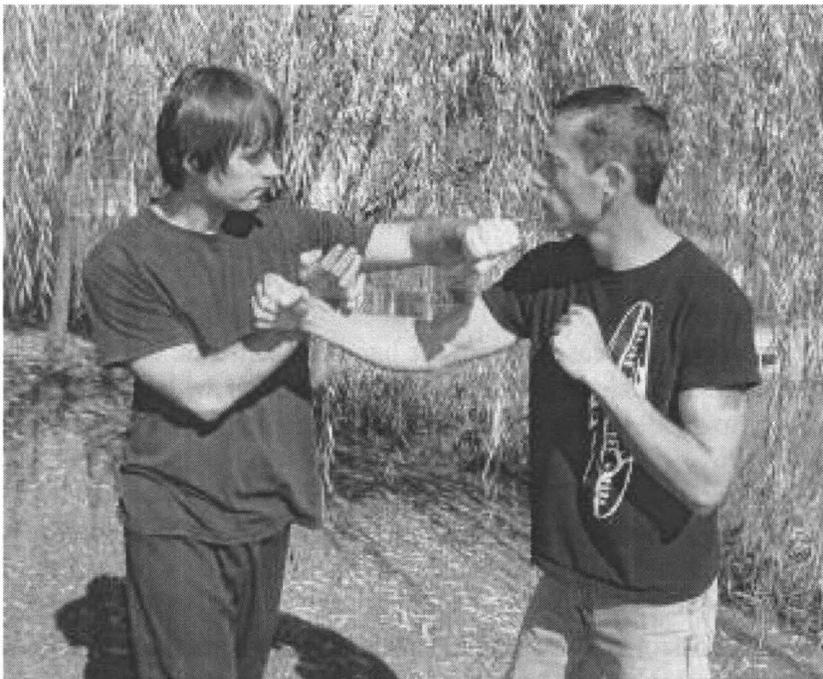
Horizontally Sweeping Strike Sequence

In the above 2 pictures, the example illustrates one of many common uses of a horizontally sweeping iron palm strike. In the first picture, the defender defends an incoming attack and then follows up with a sunfist strike to the face. The strike was unsuccessful in debilitating the attacker.

In the second picture, the attacker follows up with a second strike. Because the defender's body is somewhat coiled up from twisting to his left, this provides a good opportunity to utilize an iron palm strike during the uncoiling. As the defender uncoils to defend the incoming attack, a horizontally sweeping iron palm strike is simultaneously launched at the attacker's head. A powerful and well-planted iron palm slap to the jaw or temple will spell trouble for your opponent or enemy.

This particular method works well because it allows the whipping type of power that makes iron palm so devastating. If you decide to train this motion, make an effort to feel your body uncoil and whip to the other side. Remain relaxed and allow your hand to follow the whipping motion of your torso. And be careful not to hit your partner!

Additionally, as you train this maneuver you may find your hands get slightly tangled up when uncoiling. Working this out is simply a matter of placement and timing. Work with different angles, blocks, and stances until you are able to comfortably perform the strike without appendages getting in the way.



Horizontally Sweeping Hammer fist strike

The above representation is the use of a hammer fist. Some systems use a knife hand strike and this would work in the same manner.

In this example, the attacker throws an attack aimed at the lower jaw. The defender deflects the attack with the opposing hand, closing the opponent off. There is enough room for the other hand to slide over the top and a hammer fist sneaks in to the attacker's jaw. Hammer fist strikes can be very effective and can be easily implemented in place of another strike in most positions and situations.

Similarly to the previous situation, the body can be coiled during the defensive phase. This allows some potential energy to be stored in the spine. As defensive action completes, the body uncoils, unleashing that energy and the whipping motion allows that energy to focus itself in the fist.

Vertically Sweeping Attack

In a vertically sweeping Iron Palm strike, the palm moves from top to bottom, down onto the opponent. This is much more akin to the motion that takes place when you perform your actual conditioning routine on a canvas bag. For this reason, it is much more specific to the training you already perform and requires no additional drills to translate it into another direction—it's already there! Coincidentally, it's also the lesser discussed method.

The disadvantage here is that available chances to execute this particular method may come more rarely. However, this disadvantage becomes partially irrelevant for two reasons. First, the vertical sweep can be executed as a defensive block as well. Second, it may be a higher percentage attack in Mixed Martial Arts circles where grappling often takes place. If you attempt to use it in this fashion, be aware that a grappler can easily tie up the hands of someone unfamiliar with the grappling range. Keep this in mind and become familiar with grappling theory if you plan to try to successfully use a vertically sweeping Iron Palm strike in this range.

When performing a vertically sweeping Iron Palm strike, take these key points into account:

- Like the horizontally sweeping strike, it is not something that is used as a common attack such as a jab; it is a fight ender that should be followed by the proper softening blow.
- Unlike the horizontal sweep, this strike can also be used as a downward palm block, targeting both the arms and legs on incoming attacks. The back hand and knife hand Iron Palm strikes used as a block emulate the

motions used in several Southern short hand systems which attack or trap the limbs during an incoming attack.

- The vertically sweeping strike has a great deal of utility when you have successfully compromised the posture of your opponent. Good targets include the back of the head, the spine and other areas on the back such as the kidneys, and larger joints such as those immediately proximal to the knee caps and elbows.



Vertically Sweeping Strike to back of opponent

The above contrived picture is a perfect example of a common use of a vertically sweeping strike that many traditional artists feel they can perform on a grappler that is shooting for a takedown. Make no mistake: Performing this particular attack is not easy. However, if successful at the hands of a skilled iron palm practitioner, it can result in serious injury—so be careful!

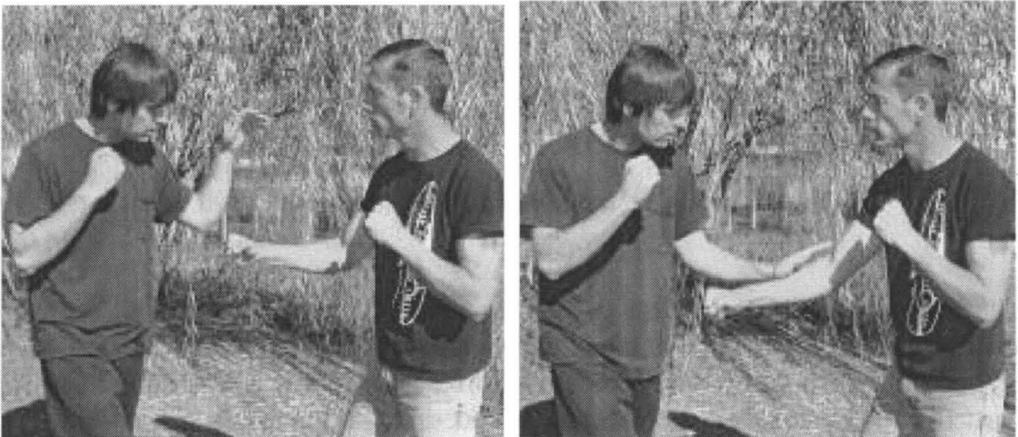
It requires the opponent to be stunned or loosened in such a way that you are able to control the neck and bring it down to waist level for the finishing iron palm strike. This type of attack should not be trained until you have become adept at controlling the neck of your opponent during sparring sessions. For use during a takedown attempt, it is recommended that you defend the takedown

with a sound takedown defense (such as a sprawl) and then attempt to perform the attack.

Believe it Or Not

Many years ago in college, I once witnessed my Iron Palm/herbalist teacher block a student's incoming attack with a vertical sweep Iron Palm strike as a demonstration of application. The Iron Palm strike/block landed near the top of the elbow and quite effectively blocked the impending attack. While the block caused some noticeable immediate pain, it was not debilitating for the student. However, as class continued, this student began to feel nauseated and decided to sit out the rest of a two-hour class.

I'm not sure whether this is a common physiological response that only the very highest skilled practitioners can reproduce or whether it was simply a coincidence. Nevertheless, it left an impression with me that Iron Palm strikes delivered by a skilled practitioner who has put in the time and effort can be used in many ways, for defense and attack, and it has a real utility that can add an extra dimension to any martial artists skill set.



Short-Throw Vertical Strike as a Defense

In the above series of picture, the defender has his guard up and sees a low strike coming to the abdomen. This could be a low uppercut, a low jab, sunfist, or “beng chuan” type strike from Xing Yi.

The fist unclenches in preparation for a strike, and as it comes in, the palm strike lands on the forearm in a similar fashion to the way an iron palm bag may be struck, either with a short-throw palm or depending on the situation, a standard palm slap.

There are a myriad of ways that iron palm can be interpreted and applied. The above applications for horizontally and vertically sweeping strikes are only a few rudimentary examples in an effort to start the creative thinking process if it has not already taken place. There are many places where iron palm strikes can be used in different situations.

When you are training iron palm applications, consider that one of the biggest obstacles in performing this or any type of martial-based maneuver is that it is often not trained to any stressful degree. As soon as a situation becomes stressful, whether it be in sparring, a real-life situation, or a very intense drill, these type of applications become difficult to perform and are often completely forgotten in the heat of the moment. To combat this, one should first become adept at handling a stressful situation with a non-compliant partner and then slowly train in these types of attacks.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL: OPTIMIZING YOUR IRON PALM TRAINING

Traditionally, Iron Palm and most full Chinese martial arts systems were taught in a very slow and controlled manner and included many areas of study aside from simply combat. This is the concept of the Scholar Warrior.

Eventually, if you stuck around long enough you would receive all the material from various topics. Coincidentally, this often times may have meant a 20 year commitment or longer. While this is not an inherently flawed training methodology, the focus on progression was different. Therefore, it provided in this different time and culture, a less than optimal progression rate due primarily to the plateau that one goes through during the adaptation process.

In Iron Palm training, a student may often be told that Iron Palm is an “incremental” system; a “progressive” model. That is, a student will begin on a soft medium with very few strikes. As weeks pass, the number of strikes tends to increase slowly. At some point, the strike count becomes constant and the student will train at this set duration/intensity for some period of time. When a new, more difficult medium is chosen, the number of strikes is reset and the student climbs through the repetitions once again. Eventually, one reaches the max number of strikes on the most advanced material used in that system and this is where they will stay for many years to come.

While the basis of this idea is fantastic and sound, it is not implemented as well as it could be in most Iron Palm programs. Because the conditioning of bone and sinew is a more arduous and lengthy process than for example, hypertrophy of muscle, the training must be performed at a slower rate. However, often times the student is given more than ample time to adapt, at which point he or she will plateau and the rate of progression will decrease, especially once one reaches their final striking medium.

Many martial artists, personal trainers, coaches, and athletes are well aware of the importance of always keeping the body guessing; continually keeping the body in a state of flux so that progress can be maximized and plateaus are encountered as rarely as possible. With any type of bodily conditioning, it is an important piece of the puzzle that helps to build world-class athletes of all types. Where there is commonly a gap in classical Iron Palm conditioning, I would like to expand on it here to provide the reader with some additions for a more comprehensive approach in training that will not produce unwanted pathologies and keep the regimen changing and evolving over the years. As always, it is best to take these training methods to your teacher and work with them to integrate them usefully and safely into your individual training regimen. I can only provide so much in a book; it is up to you and those whom you trust to teach you, to go forward with training in the best way. If you are in need of training, I do provide full instruction in the Iron Palm training as well as program design.

Improvement vs. Maintenance

Whether it be Iron Palm, fitness, or your chosen career it is important to distinguish between various stages of training and skill level. While the beginner or intermediate Iron Palmist is probably in a continuous state of learning and wanting to improve their Iron Palm capabilities, more advanced practitioners may only be interested in maintenance of what they already have. The following methods are primarily for those in the improvement stage or those looking for something to add. If you are simply interested in maintenance, a few good consistent sessions per week and the occasional break is all that is required to maintain bone density and neuromuscular coordination and connection. However, if you feel you might be in a plateau or want to step up your training or progression rate, the following are a breakdown and some examples of how that may be accomplished.

Varying time, intensity, frequency, and mode are all pretty straightforward, but important methods to spark improvement and growth. While the concept of these ideas may have existed far back in the past, we have come to a better understanding and categorization of them in modern day sports science. You can see these play out if you've ever visited a gym and worked with a professional personal trainer.

The more interesting training modifications will show up in varying the mode or methods of training.

Varying Intensity

Varying intensity is the first way that changes can be made to a program to alleviate plateaus in training. In varying the intensity, you are controlling how hard you are taxing your body and how difficult the training is. The method of training, number of strikes, and frequency of training all remain the same and only the intensity or difficulty changes. If we were talking about jogging, increasing intensity would translate to either increasing speed or working on a more challenging surface, such as an incline.

For Iron Palm, varying intensity generally refers to the practice of issuing force to the Iron Palm bag during strikes. Keep in mind, Iron Palm is usually taught as a soft, relaxed drop on to the bag so it is very important to discuss intensity modifications with your teacher. However, with that in mind, eventually issuing power in your conditioning is an important part of your progression.

Some systems will gradually issue more force in small increments as the student becomes more adept and the hands adapt to take on additional stress. One can vary the intensity by gradually adding a small amount of additional force to the strike. This will stress the hand structure more and recruit more muscular power, so be careful and go slowly. One may choose to add additional intensity to their routine only so often or towards the end of the routine. A gradual way to go about issuing force is to start with the addition of a small amount of force on the last 10 repetitions of each strike. After a week, issue a small amount of force on the last 20 repetitions, issuing force beginning 10 repetitions earlier each week until all strikes are completed with a small amount of force. At this point, if continual progression is desired, begin the process over by again incrementing the power which you strike the bag.

As another approach, one can treat varying intensity as interval training. You may, for example, perform 10 strikes as relaxed as possible, and then 10 strikes with the addition of some force, concentrating during these strikes on moving your body for power production. One can take this idea to a more general level as well by skipping sessions. Today your session is as usual and tomorrow your session adds small amounts of force to your strike, the next day followed by the normal session, and so forth.

Intensity can also be increased more safely when sessions with increased force generation are done on a bag composed of a medium that is softer than what you are used to hitting. For example, if you usually strike steel shot, you may decide to occasionally pull out a gravel or bean bag and do your Iron Palm session on this easier bag, but with greater force exertion on the bag, perhaps even close to full power. Note the relaxation you can achieve during these intense sessions and try to emulate that feeling when breaking.

The second method of increasing intensity is to simply move to a more challenging medium, (some may consider this a change in mode rather than intensity). We can base how challenging the medium is based on several physical properties of a given material; density and hardness being most significant, followed by size and shape. And while I do not advocate the direct method of directly striking the medium, this is also one way that intensity, (or mode), can be increased.

Changing mediums is a big step and need only be done on rare occasion. Below is a list of various mediums and their associated densities and Brinell hardness factors. While density refers to the mass of a substance per unit volume, hardness is a much less universally understood term. Generally, hardness relates to a material's resistance to deformation. Beans, gravel, iron shot, steel shot, and lead shot are some of the more commonly seen and used materials in Iron Palm training, while sand and rice are more common for thrusting exercises. These commonly used mediums appear in bold-face to more clearly illustrate their relative place among materials of different density. Sand packs hard and does not provide much give. I recommend that you do *not* use sand for your Iron Palm training. Rice bags can be useful in sessions that focus on power production where one strikes full force. Rice is soft enough that you can drastically reduce your chances of injury. With enough time in steel shot, you may find it a waste of time to move back to gravel for power striking sets.

Approximate densities in units of Kg/m³:

Pine: 350
Bentonite Clay: 593
Red Oak: 660
Rice, Hulled: 750
Beans, Soy: 750
Water: 1,000
Dry Sand: 1,440
Gravel: 1,600
Red Brick: 1,922
Mortar Cement: 2,162
Iron Pyrite: 2,500
Hematite (Iron Ore): 5,100
Galena (Lead Ore): 7,500
Steel, Rolled: 7,850
Nickel, Rolled: 8,660
Copper: 8,930
Lead, Rolled: 11,390
Tungsten: 19,600

Approximate Brinell Hardness Number in units of Kg/mm²:

Rice, Hulled: Two or less

Beans: Two or less

Hard Plastic: Seven

Lead: Seven

Pine: 40

Red Oak: 40

Sand: 65

Iron Pyrite: 95

Steel 1010: 95

Gravel: 100

Steel Shot: 110

Nickel: 200

Steel 1080: 233

Tungsten: 400

There are a great number of interesting conclusions one can draw from this list. To illustrate one, let us look at lead and compare it to steel; two of the more advanced striking substances commonly employed in Iron Palm programs available today.

Lead is almost twice as dense as steel, meaning it weighs almost twice as much while taking up the same amount of volume. This means that the material within can absorb a greater amount of force or energy due to the mitigation of a wave through a molecular structure. This is likely why striking a lead bag provides a very dead type of feeling. The lead can easily absorb the force of impact through its denser molecular structure. However, despite this density difference, steel is vastly “harder” than lead (more than 15x), meaning it resists deformation more strongly, owing up to the fact that steel can often feel like it stings a bit more. Lead can deform from an impact quite easily in comparison to steel, and while it is a difficult medium to strike, it is forgiving in its own way. Conditioning on these two substances produces a very different type of feel and now it is clear why. While I enjoy the feeling of striking a lead bag, I recommend striking steel shot. The relatively high density and very high hardness factor of steel, combined with its safety margin over lead, make it favorable over a lead shot bag.

Please note that when using steel, and especially lead, it is vitally important that you enclose these substances in a vinyl-lined canvas Iron Palm bag. Zippers should not be used and the bag should be properly sewn shut so as to keep metallic dust from emanating from the bag and inhaled into the lungs.

PlumDragon Herbs sells specially fabricated vinyl-lined Iron Palm bags for this purpose. These bags are durable and can withstand years of abuse. Vinyl-lined bags are sold at a minimal cost and last a very long time. Because of this, I generally recommend that all striking medium are placed in a vinyl-lined bag of this sort and replaced in intervals of no longer than every two years, regardless of the apparent condition of the bag. If the bag shows signs of wear that would allow dust to escape the bag, replace as soon as possible.

Lastly, Tungsten has been included on this list. I'm not aware of anyone using tungsten as a striking material, but it is available in shot form, just like steel and lead. However, it is cost-prohibitively expensive. At any rate, it would be a very interesting substance to attempt striking as it is significantly more dense and harder than both steel and lead. Perhaps as time goes on, this material will become more affordable and it will usher in a new type of shot for the ultra-advanced practitioners...

Varying Duration

Varying duration, (or time spent on a session of the activity), is similar to varying intensity in that it increases overall volume of work being accomplished or stress being applied. In varying time, the intensity, frequency of training, and method of training all remain constant, but the amount of time you spend training increases. If you used to perform a total of 400 strikes in one session, you might add 50 or 100 additional strikes progressively, perhaps 10 repetitions per strike each week. While the disadvantage here is that your total time invested will increase, if you want to get in more training while maintaining a relaxed non-forceful strike, this is how it can be done. The advantage here is that you are receiving more repetitions. Where varying intensity will concentrate more growth in the conditioning of the bones and tissues in the hand, varying the time by adding strikes helps to increase neuromuscular coordination to produce power and also benefits the conditioning of the hand from the perspective of duration.

As you and your teacher add more strikes to your training regimen, keep in mind that while doing more strikes will accelerate your training, it may increase the risk of injury and at some point, one will hit diminishing returns. That is, if you hit the bag 500 times, while the second 250 repetitions are worthwhile and important, they will not be as profound to your progression as the first 250. So always consider that as you increase your strike count, your gains will increase more slowly and your risk of injury will increase more quickly.

One last method of varying both time and intensity and keeping risk of injury low is to perform warm-up or cool-down sets. Aside from Qigong, stretching,

etc., you can warm-up or cool-down by performing some number of repetitions of strikes on a bag filled with a medium that is softer than what you are presently working with. For example, if you are striking gravel, you may start your routine with a set number of very smooth, relaxed, easy strikes on a bean bag to warm up the hand. If you are striking steel shot, you may start on gravel by performing 20 or 25 warm-up repetitions. Similarly, a cool-down can be done at the end. A sample routine may be as follows:

Warm-Up: 25 repetitions per strike per hand on bean or gravel bag.

Routine: 75 repetitions per strike per hand on steel shot bag.

Cool-Down: 25 slow soft repetitions per strike per hand on bean or gravel bag, focusing on breathing and returning the body to a relaxed state.

This effectively increases duration in a progressive manner. After time, the warm-up sets can be done on harder mediums or the number can be increased. Ultimately, it is up to you!

Warm-ups and cool-downs performed in this way have benefits for all types of physical activities. The most important one in Iron Palm training is probably the reduction in risk of injury from training. The warm-up will allow time for your hand to naturally increase Blood flow and preparing the muscles to strike the bag accurately and with correct form. It is not as much of a “shock” to the body.

Also, please note that it is recommended that your training take place on *both* hands. I have found that maintaining lateral balance throughout the musculoskeletal system is the healthiest method to adopt. Additionally, you can increase the skill of both hands at almost the same rate as if you trained on only one. The proof is in the pudding.

Varying Frequency

Some Iron Palm systems indicate that training should be done once per day, while others indicate training two or three times per day. Some schools are even so strict as to suggest that training sessions should take place at exactly 12-hour intervals. Nevertheless, there are other programs which are less strict and recommend that you train five or six times a week.

In the beginning, keeping training sessions at regularly spaced intervals ensures that your hands have as much time to heal as possible before the next session.

Once you have a base line of conditioning and feel you are hitting a plateau, you can benefit from varying the frequency of your routines.

For those who train less than seven days per week, increasing frequency can be as simple as adding in an extra session so that you are training each and every day. Conversely, if you prefer to have a day off but still want to step up your frequency, pick a couple days towards the end of your training week and add an additional session. If you train in the evening, add a morning session; if you train in the morning, add an evening session. Placing these two-session days at the end of your training week will allow you to build up to your higher frequency sessions as the week rolls on, and will also allow your body extra time to heal on your day off if you happened to sustain an injury. It would be counterproductive to place a two-session day at the beginning of your weekly training and injure yourself, rendering the rest of the week useless.

After some period of time, your body will begin to get used to this type of schedule, at which point you can place two-session days earlier in your training. As long as you are not injured or over-training, randomize your schedule and keep your body guessing!

For those training once every day, the above explanation of two-session days is the best and most helpful tool in varying the frequency of your training.

For those who train two or three times each and every day, increasing frequency can be a bit more complicated of a task. However, you can still engage in this change by altering the times at which you practice. Studies on exercise science have shown that altering details even as minor as the time of day that you train can have an effect on plateaus. So, if you train twice a day –once first thing in the morning and once in the evening– train at lunch and in the evening. If you have a ritual of lifestyle activities that you do before or after Iron Palm sessions (drinking tea, eating breakfast, etc.) try breaking the routine. It may even be helpful for those in a plateau to take a day off. If you train twice per day, take a day off, and follow it by two or three sessions the next day. Be random, break the patterns and force your body to adapt. Because the body excels so much at adapting, people often feel they don't want to break routine because the way they do it works best for their body. This is one very good reason to break the routine. If you force your body to take the harder path, to adapt to new uncomfortable changes, you can experience punctual growth from it.

Bodybuilders use similar methods to increase muscular power when in a plateau and in this regard, taking time off ,(lowering frequency), on occasion can actually be very fruitful as well, and is much better if you have not conditioned your hands up to a certain point. I find that skipping even a single session every few weeks can help my hands catch up on any minute little injuries hanging

around. If you skip a session, it is still a good idea to go through your usual Dit Da Jow application.

Breakdown Training

In muscular strength programs there is a method of increasing both time and intensity to overcome plateaus in training. This method, referred to as breakdown training, is implemented with the idea of training with failure in mind. When performing a lift, such as a bicep curl, one may continue performing reps until they are unable to perform additional reps, i.e. they hit failure. At this point the weights are put down and a slightly less heavy weight is quickly picked up and more repetitions are immediately performed while the muscle is still very fatigued. The idea is that the body still has minimal energy in reserve to perform the exercise, but only enough for a lower weight.

We can apply this same idea to Iron Palm training. If you feel you may be at a plateau, you might consider doing your normal routine and immediately after you've finished your usual number of repetitions, switch to a bag with a slightly softer medium, (from steel shot to gravel, for example), and proceed to continue training. A good start may be to perform 20% of the strikes on this softer material that you would do in a normal routine. Performing training sessions like this once or twice per week for three to four weeks may be helpful overcome obstacles in conditioning. The idea here is to add them as a method of varying frequency.

DISCLAIMER: To repeat what has already been stated, this type of training can cause injury. Please utilize methods such as breakdown training (both in the weight room as well as with Iron Palm) with a very high level of awareness of what you are doing. Only *you* can be held responsible for injuries that occur from your training!

Varying Mode/Method

Varying the methodology of a training program is undoubtedly the most fun, refreshing, and creative approach to moving your training forward. It is also the most useful for increasing actual skill. The methods that will be looked at are directed primarily at strengthening the sinew and muscle from the fingers up to the shoulders, changing the location of Iron Palm bags, and recruiting new motor units for improved coordination and power development in a relevant context.

Muscular Strength and Endurance

A strength training program that is helpful for the Iron Palm practitioner includes resistance exercises that strengthen the large muscle groups and tendons found in the wrist, arms, shoulders, chest, waist, and latissimus dorsi. These groups are connected to the torso (core), which helps to transfer power from the ground up through the muscle groups of the legs such as the quadriceps and hamstrings. All of these muscle groups serve some callisthenic role in development of whole body power.

In the production of power, the lower body and upper body work in tandem, in coordination with the core or torso area. It is important to understand that the muscle groups, especially of the upper body, will work in slightly different ways when striking a horizontal bag than they will when striking an opponent that is standing upright. The below muscle groups and exercises are aimed primarily at the muscles involved in striking an erect target using a horizontally sweeping strike. However, there is a large overlap and these exercises will hit necessary muscles for striking a horizontal bag as well, or for the vertically sweeping strike. For more information on applications, please review the section on “Applying the Iron Palm.”

In reference to the upper body, several muscle groups are responsible for producing motions necessary for power in an Iron Palm strike. Around the shoulder, these include the latissimus dorsi, some musculature around the rotator cuff, (such as the teres minor), pectoralis major and minor, and, (specifically for striking a standing target), the triceps and anterior deltoid. In the forearm and wrist, the radial flexors and extensors act primarily as stabilizers against impact. The biceps brachii and pronator teres may also play minor roles in the supination and pronation of the wrist during transitional movements between strikes or during the raising of the hand prior to a strike. Many internal arts refer to the twisting or coiling of the wrist in their analysis of power production.

Exercises to focus on for these muscles include lat pull-downs, push-ups and chin-ups/pull-ups. Additionally, standing cable chest-presses can be used either with a horizontal fist orientation or a vertical sunfist orientation, (with elbow on center line), to simulate the desired punching style. An additional option is to utilize a “plyometric pushup” with the desired fist orientation. For forearm and wrist strength, include wrist curls and reverse wrist curls. Grip exercises can increase the strength and thickness of tissues in the wrist and hand. For this, Iron Mind is an excellent company selling a line of grip strength tools that are of fantastic quality.

All of these exercises are meant to produce an increase in muscle strength which should be appropriately balanced. To balance the muscle work in the shoulders

and chest, any type of rowing will work well in addition to shoulder raises. Flywheel-based rowing machines are common in health clubs and offer a break from the weights and iso-linear machines.

Strengthening the core is also an important part of power production. Both the abdominals and the muscles of the lower back and through the waist help to stabilize and connect the lower body to the upper body. This is of particular importance in Chinese martial arts systems because power is often obtained through the practices of rooting and coiling. Because the core acts as a conduit from the lower body to the upper body, the power of a good root can mean nothing if the core is unable to transfer that power to the hands.

Exercises to focus on for these muscles include bent-knee sit-ups, twisting bent-knee sit-ups, and back extensions for the back. Any type of exercise where the waist is twisted from one side to the other while under resistance will be useful in strengthening the waist. Any twisting and coiling exercise is excellent at building the whipping and releasing power of the waist and hips. Kettlebells, weight vests, and heavy weapons work can often substantially increase the power output of the core and coincidentally, squats performed properly can also play a part in strengthening the core.

The cable crossover machine is one of the most useful pieces of equipment in any full gym and I have designed several effective exercises that can be carried out on this machine. It can be used to provide tension while coiling the body. Load the cable crossover initially with about 35-40 pounds of weight and adjust the bar so that it is at shoulder height. Perform coiling exercises by twisting the waste and allowing the crossover to provide resistance to this motion. This is a whole-body maneuver that will greatly aid in building up the muscles in the torso.

The lower body is composed of a number of large and powerful muscle groups that can be trained in a plethora of ways, depending on the philosophies of your style and how stance and footwork is trained. It can be important to follow the drills specific to your style for footwork and leg strength.

With that said, it is worth mentioning squats, (again), and jumping rope. Squats, (or alternatively, leg presses or lunges), effectively target the quadriceps, hamstrings, and gluteals in one fell swoop. This is a promising exercise to add to any martial arts workout routine. Squats provide serious strength benefits. Jumping rope can be used to target the lower portions of the leg and is also an effective cardiovascular inclusion. It offers a purely plyometric components as well. Both squats and jumping rope are easy to integrate and are helpful supplements to the static stance training that appears in many Chinese systems.

Lastly, it should be noted than any of the above exercises that require you to extend or “push” can also be performed by substituting a medicine ball and thrusting it outward. This is useful for enhancing muscle fibers that produce explosiveness in these movements.

Bag Orientation

Perhaps the single biggest discrepancy between Iron Palm training and actually striking an opponent exists with the alignment of the strike. Iron Palm is trained by striking the bag with a vertical motion, whereas a strike that is thrown at an erect attacker might be implemented with a horizontal motion or –depending on the system you study– vertically as well. Due to the principle of Specificity of Training, this will mean that in the case of a horizontally sweeping strike there will be a less than optimal transfer of neuromuscular coordination when the Iron Palm strike is mapped into a real-world situation. The single best way to counteract this discrepancy is, of course, to place the bag in a new position once some proficiency is gained in Iron Palm and begin to train the change in neuromuscular coordination.

Bags can be mounted directly in front of you slightly off to the side. Bags placed in front of you and off to the side can be angled inward such that strikes can be performed by striking the bag on the side opposite of the hand you are striking with. This is akin to the orientation that boxers use when doing focus mitt work. Conversely, bags can also be oriented without any change in mounting angle for strikes that come from the same side but offset from center, much like the way a baseball pitcher would hit a bag in front of him but off to the side. These bags can either be hanging on a wall, such as commonly seen wall bags, or they can be attached to a ceiling structure so they hang like a punching bag.

While your teacher will work with you to determine the proper routine for this type of bag orientation, it should have the same feel as your Iron Palm routine. Long throw and short throw palm strikes, back hand strikes, chops/hammer fists, and finger strikes should all have a similar feel and energy to your previous routine, but now be performed in a more realistic sense. You may find that the way you had performed a strike before simply doesn’t work very well when in the proper context and that it is time for a change. Eventually, you will want to spend some time breaking at these new angles to become comfortable with issuing power in this direction.

As you become more adept at the changes in routine, you can vary the intensity, duration, frequency, and method/mode using the discussion topics above. Additionally, application work can become an enjoyable and fruitful pursuit

while using hanging bags. Work on the hanging bag will eventually become less robotic and more akin to shadow boxing.

Hanging bags for striking can be filled with any of the materials already discussed. However, it is best to begin with mediums such as rice or beans, moving on to other mediums slowly over time. Gravel is a good idea because it is substantially lighter than metal shot and is a bit softer which facilitates very powerful strikes.

For those who are more inclined to perform Qigong as a very significant part of their routine, you may consider adding this step to your session once you've been at it for a while:

Starting with a reduced number of repetitions for the session, set your body as if you were going to break; strike the bag with forceful impact but not full force. Rather, hit the bag at about 50% power. When your hands lands on the bag, pause. In stillness, breathe. Allow your body to run through a repetition of Qigong, whether this be through your micro/macro-cosmic orbits or through visualizations which route flow through the hands and down to the dan tien, and lastly back to the hands before the next strike. As you become used to this routine, slowly add repetitions or power or both. Be careful, go slow!

This exercise can either be performed as a modified stand-alone routine or in addition to any of the above concepts. As an example, you may wish to train this as a breakdown training set or a warm-up. The possible combinations are infinite. It's up to you to find what you like best and implement it.

Having discussed the variance of intensity, duration, frequency, and method you are now armed with a great real of possibility. There are literally thousands of permutations and combinations of each of these variations. You have a great number of ways to vary training to become more challenging with a fresh new feel. This should last a great long time. And while there are other more advanced training methods to learn, learning how to keep your body adapting by varying intensity, duration, frequency, and method are the most important factors in your growth.

A Note on Internal vs. External

Many proponents of Iron Palm dissect the world by “internal” and “external” boundaries, (i.e., Tai Chi or Bagua are perceived as internal while a system such as Choy Lay Fut may be viewed as more external), and may claim that it is Qi that moves the body and that muscular contractions have little bearing on power

development. You may hear that being completely and totally relaxed and “allowing the Qi to flow” is the only way to produce real power. While relaxation is certainly important, ultimately our goal here is optimal conditioning for power production in martial arts. While Iron Palm is a slow training method that takes many years, we don’t want to waste our time on sub-optimal practices. Speaking of cultivating Qi to break a block, keep your hand from becoming injured, or moving in an internal way rather than an external one, tends to throw us off track and confuse us about what the proper way to train really is.

Qi is a clinical term used for the analysis and diagnosis of clinical patterns and manifestations. Qi is thought of in many ways to describe many types of things. But the muscles are the prime movers of the body and the brain is the control center. Forget about the distinction between internal and external. Enjoy what you practice and put in the necessary hours and it won’t matter.

Because the muscles are the prime movers of the body and because these muscles are attached to bone via tendons, it is our goal here to optimize available force production in muscle fibers in all of the relevant areas of the body, while also promoting the growth of attached tendon and bone in the hands and arms. This is both a mental and physical task and the barrier between internal and external is generally a misnomer. Train diligently, focus on relaxation, and listen to your teachers. Forget about internal versus external and just do the real work. This work will pay off and in 5-10 years, people will not care whether it’s external or not because they will be impressed with the ability you can display at will.

With that said, the topics discussed in this book have originated from both the internal and external schools of thought. Qigong and visualizations are largely an internal practice, while the addition of weight lifting and musculoskeletal training is largely seen as external. Increasing the size (strength) of the muscle fibers, the prime movers of the body, is important in determining the maximum power output. This is not to say that relaxation and whole-body coordination are not tantamount; they are! But these two puzzle pieces must be both addressed in their own, distinct way for our being to flourish in its goals.

There is much discussion on internal versus external. However, if you stay diligent to your training, put the time and effort in and work hard, you will build serious skill. Being caught up in the argument about internal and external does nothing for you training. Simply put, train your entire body hard and diligently (internally *and* externally) and reap the benefits!

Vibrating Palm Training

Vibrating Palm training is composed of its own progressive sets of drills used to promote skill in the iron arts. Various conditioning drills are taught at different times and used for a specific period of time. Each drill will take the practitioner a certain distance, at which point the drill is either dropped or modified for the next step. There are many of these drills that take many years to complete. However, progress comes quickly with this type of training.

Having had the chance to train several of the drills found in the Vibrating Palm system, it is clear that these drills are unique and not generally found in other systems of Iron Palm training. For the few who have had the fortune of training these drills, they have proven to be unique in their ability to effectively build skill with power production and conditioning. Because these endeavors are worthwhile for any Iron Palm practitioner to seek out, I recommend that they be added to the regimen of any serious Iron Palmist. Please feel free to contact Rodney Morgan, our brother in arms at the Iron Lotus Society, for further information on how this training can be received. Alternatively, you can contact PlumDragon Herbs and we can put you in contact with the proper channels. The Iron Lotus Society website can be found in Appendix II.

CLOSING REMARKS

Throughout this work, a focus has been given to help arm individual practitioners with the tools necessary to be self-sufficient. While there is no substitute for a good teacher who can correct you in a myriad of ways, the hope is that with the information given within these pages that you may feel empowered to realize your full potential and not feel as though a ten-year sentence is necessary to obtain closed-door material. On the other hand, if you are a teacher, hopefully you have had a chance to browse new ideas and material that you can use to continue enriching your students.

Use this book for your training and teaching. Let it awaken your creative faculties. Explore these training paths and be creative in your endeavors while referencing back to your peers and seniors for input. If their answers seem guarded or apprehensive, perhaps they do not hold your success as a primary concern and it may be time to seek more open-minded waters.

With time, perseverance, and understanding of one another, we can usher in a new generation of highly skilled Iron Palm practitioners who can learn and share their experiences and training tools with one another.

Good luck in your training!

Appendix I – Cross-Reference of Herb Names in Text

I hope you will find the below list useful as a reference. Each herb from the book can be found below, given in its pinyin name and associated English/common name, followed by a notes section for you to keep track of details you find important.

Herb Pinyin	Herb Common	Notes
Bai Jie Zi	Mustard Seed	
Bai Shao	White Peony	
Bai Zhi	White Angelica	
Bai Zhu	White Atractylodes	
Ban Xia	Pinellia Seed	
Bo He	Chinese Mint	
Bu Gu Zhi	Psoralea	
Chai Hu	Bupleurum	
Chen Pi	Mature Orange Peel	
Chi Shao	Red Peony	
Chuan Xiong	Ligusticum Root	
Da Huang	Rhubarb Root	
Dan Shen	Salvia Root	
Dang Gui	Angelica Root	
Dang Gui Wei	Angelica Root Tail	
Dang Shen	Codonopsis	
Ding Xiang	Clove Flower	
Du Zhong	Eucommia Bark	
E Zhu	Zeodaria	
Er Cha	Catechu Paste	
Fang Feng	Siler Root	
Fu Ling	Poria	
Ge Jie	Gecko	
Gou Qi Zi	Lycium Berry	
Gu Sui Bu	Drynaria	
Gui Zhi	Cinnamon Twig	
Hai Ma	Sea Horse	
Hai Tong Pi	Erythrina Bark	
Hu Zhang	Knotweed	

Huang Bai	Phellodendron	
Huang Jing	Solomons Seal	
Huang Lian	Coptis	
Huang Qi	Astragalus	
Huang Qin	Skullcap	
Jiang Huang	Turmeric	
Liu Ji Nu	Artemisia Anom.	
Long Gu	Dragon Bone	
Lu Cha	Green Tea	
Lu Jiao Jiao	Deer Horn Glue	
Lu Rong	Deer Antler	
Ma Qian Zi	Nux Vomica	
Mo Yao	Myrrh	
Mu Dan Pi	Mountain Peony	
Mu Gua	Quince Fruit	
Mu Xiang	Aucklandia Root	
Niu Xi (Chuan)	Cyathula	
Niu Xi (Huai)	Achyranthes	
Pu Gong Ying	Dandelion	
Pu Huang	Cattail Pollen	
Qian Nian Jian	Homalomena	
Qiang Huo	Notopterygium	
Qin Jiao	Chinese Gentian	
Qing Pi	Immature Orange	
Rou Gui	Cinnamon Bark	
Ru Xiang	Frankincense	
San Leng	Burreed Rhizome	
San Qi	Pseudoginseng	
Sang Ji Sheng	Mulberry	
Snag Zhi	Mulberry	
Shan Zhu Yu	Cornus Berry	
Shen Jin Cao	Japanese Clubmoss	
Sheng Di Huang	Raw Rehmannia	
Shu Di Huang	Cooked Rehmannia	
Shui Zhi	Leach	
Song Xiang	Pine Resin	
Tao Ren	Peach Kernel	

Tian Ma	Gastrodia	
Tian Nan Xing	Arisaema	
Tu Bie Chong	Cockroach	
Wei Ling Xian	Clematis Root	
Wu Jia Pi	Acanthopanax	
Xu Duan	Dipsacus Root	
Xue Jie	Dragon Blood	
Yan Hu Suo	Corydalis Rhizome	
Yu Jin	Turmeric	
Zhi Zi	Gardenia Fruit	
Zi Ran Tong	Pyrite	

Appendix II – Other Notable Sources of Information

Traditional Chinese Medicine Theory/Five Element Theory

Beinfeld, H., & Korngold, E. (1991). *Between Heaven and Earth*. New York: Random House.

Kaptchuk, T. (2000). *The Web That Has No Weaver: Understanding Chinese Medicine*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Tierra, M. & Tierra L. (1998). *Chinese Traditional Medicine, Vol. 1: Diagnosis and Treatment*. Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press.

Tierra, M. & Tierra L. (1998). *Chinese Traditional Medicine, Vol. 2: Materia Medica and Herbal Resource*. Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press.

This 2-volume set of books is wonderful for anyone who is attempting to learn Chinese herbalism and is very new to the ideas and concepts.

Fitness and Strength/Conditioning Material

Radcliffe, J. & Farentinos, R. (1998). *High Powered Plyometrics*. Champagne, IL: Library of Congress.

Rooney, M. (2008). *Training for Warriors*. New York: Harper Collins.

Siebert, R. (2003). *ACE Personal Trainer Manual: The Ultimate Resource for Fitness Professionals, 3rd Edition*. San Diego, CA: ACE.

Qigong Material

Jwing-Ming, Y. (1997). *The Root of Chinese Qigong: Secrets for Health, Longevity, and Enlightenment*. Massachusetts: YMAA Publication Center.

Vendors Mentioned Within this Work

Iron Mind website for Captains of Crush Grippers:
<http://www.captainsofcrushgrippers.com/>

Dr. Mike Neeley's Acupuncture Clinic:

<http://neeleyacupuncture.com/>

Dr. Neeley is a Doctor of Herbalism and Acupuncture and treats patients in the Huntsville, AL area. He is also a respected representative of Usana and has had MD-level training in biomedicine. I have had the pleasure of spending many hours with him in his clinic, where we have covered a variety of topics and a museum. If you are in the area, I highly recommend stopping by for an acupuncture treatment. Mention my name and you'll get special treatment.

Relevant Websites

PlumDragon Herbs & Dit Da Jow main website:

<http://www.PlumDragonHerbs.com>

The Iron Lotus Society:

<http://www.TheIronLotusSociety.com>

PlumDragon Herbs & Dit Da Jow articles site:

<http://www.PlumDragonJow.com>

Grand Master Tabimina's Balintawak Website:

<http://www.TabiminaBalintawak.com>

Tabimina Balintawak USA, South East Region:

<http://www.TabiminaBalintawakSE.com>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Josh Walker has been studying martial arts since childhood and has been involved in herbal medicine since 2001. Having studied a variety of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino martial arts, in addition to MMA, Josh now dedicates his martial training time to the Filipino martial art of Tabimina Balintawak directly under the Tabimina family. Josh has been fortunate to train with this great family of martial artists and is forever-grateful for their direction and support.

Continuing to perform and refine his Iron Palm training regimen is still a daily activity, as Josh moves in to the frontier of current research in reference to Iron Palm conditioning and works to continue building his Iron Palm skills.

Josh spent six years in the military while concurrently earning a Bachelor's Degree in Electrical/Computer Engineering (2003) from the prestigious Engineering College at Colorado State University. Following an honorable discharge from the United States Air Force in 2003, Josh went on to found PlumDragon Herbs in 2006 while working full-time as an Engineer for the United States Army. In 2009, Josh earned his ACE-certified professional personal trainer certification and began providing personal training and martial arts instruction, in addition to the duties already being performed under PlumDragon.

In September of 2010, Josh resigned from a promising career as an upper-level engineer for the Army and relocated to Destin, Florida to pursue passions in martial arts and fitness, and to run PlumDragon Herbs as a full-time endeavor. Josh teaches martial arts in and around Destin as well as on the beach, which serves as a daily distraction, one that is quite welcome!