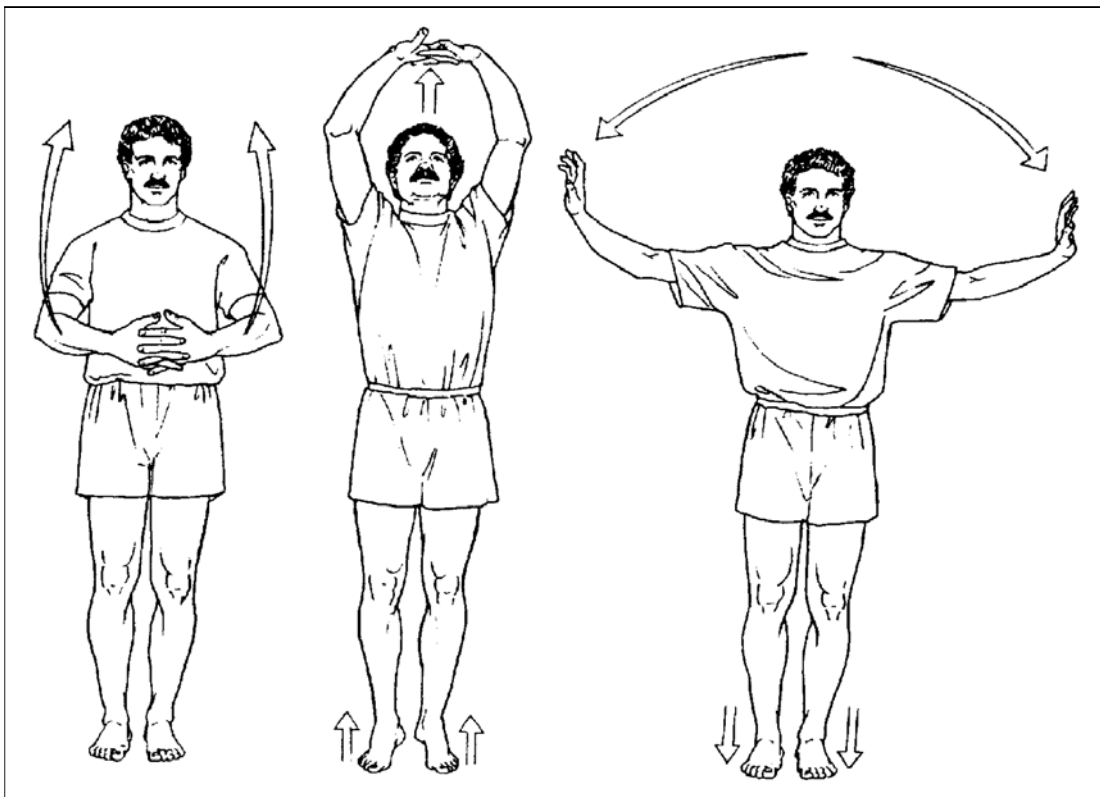


# Reaching Upward, Stretching Outward

from *The Healer Within* by Dr. Roger Jahnke

Begin with feet together or apart – your choice. This can be done sitting. As you inhale, lace the fingers together and bring the palms, facing toward the body, past the chest. As they pass before the face and eyes, rotate the palms so that they are facing downward, then outward, and then upward toward the sky. Extend the arms upward. Rise up on the balls of the feet. Hold the position and the breath for a moment. This is called “Supporting Heaven,” an ancient oriental practice.

Then unlace the fingers as the exhalation begins. Extend the arms outward to the sides. Point the tips of the fingers upward, aim the palms outward, and reach out from the center of the body to the heel of the palm as the arms are lowered. Lower the heels of your feet as well. Repeat slowly. In the sitting position this exercise is nearly identical, including lifting up the heels.) Find a rhythm for linking the movement and the breath that is deep, slow, and relaxed, or allow the breath and the movement to have separate rhythms. Either is fine.



**Benefits:** The act of reaching up expands the rib cage, which increases lung capacity and strength. Rising up on the toes strengthens the lower leg, contributes to balance, and pumps the lymph from the lower limbs. The deep breath pumps the lymph fluid, particularly in the abdominal cavity when the diaphragm drops down. The process of exerting effort and then relaxing also propels the lymph. Relaxation during this practice expands the blood vessels, reducing blood pressure and allowing oxygen and nutrients to penetrate the tissues. In addition, relaxation increases the self-healing neurological functions that are active when the autonomic nervous system is at rest, promoting decreased brain-wave frequency and the production of healing neurotransmitters.