

**THIS
SERIES
OF
FIVE
MOVES
MAY
REVERSE
AGING.**

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Tibetan

REJUVENATE

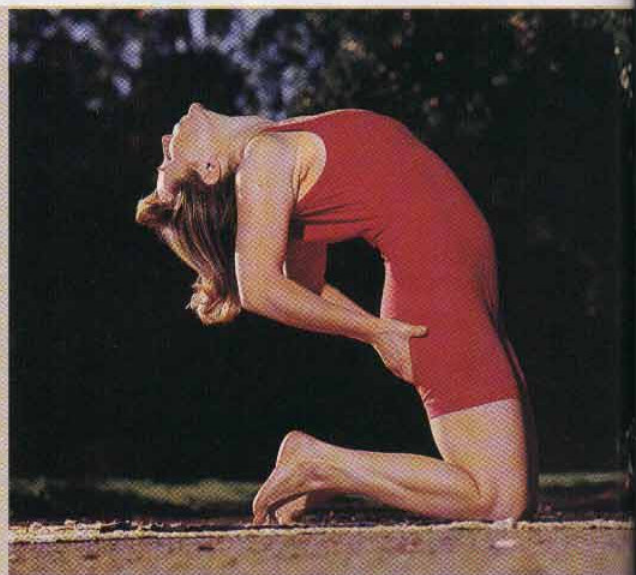
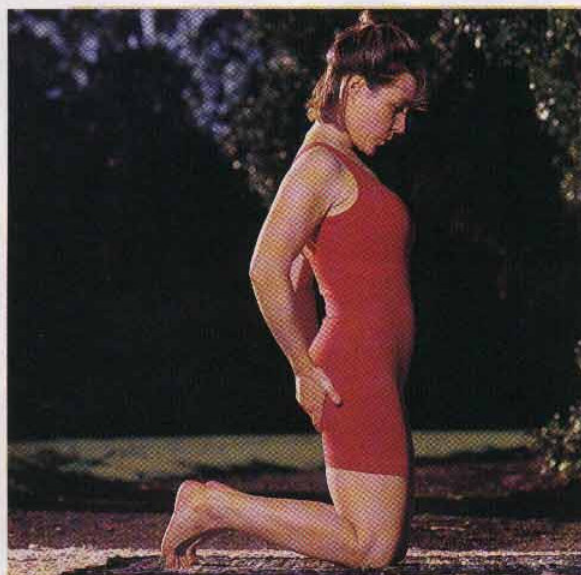
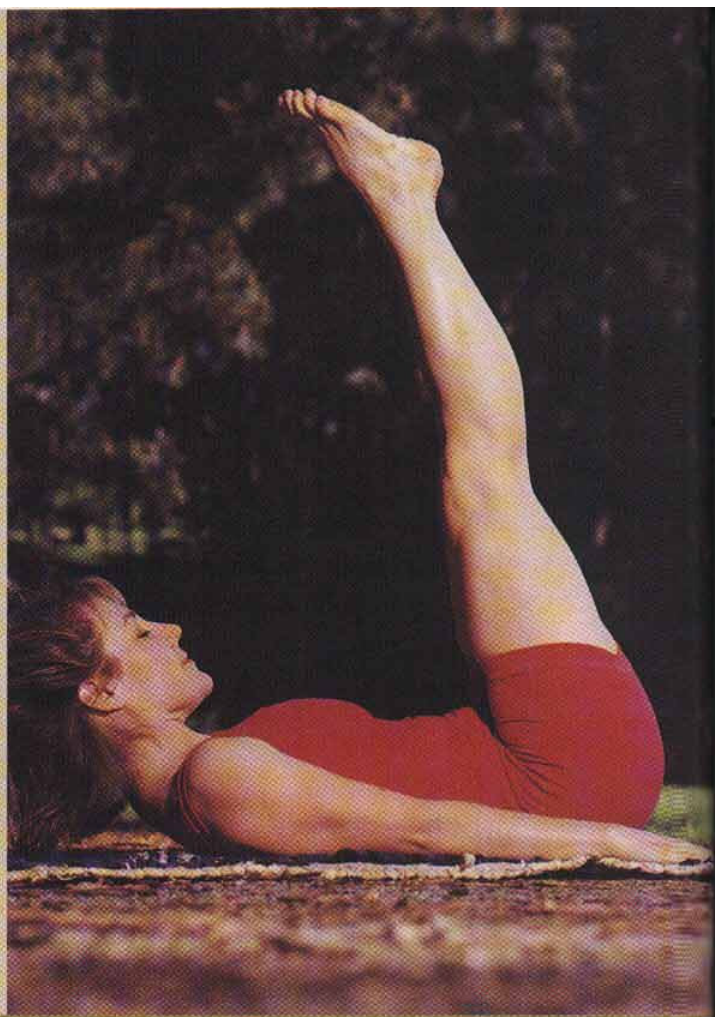
Legend has it that in the remote reaches of the Tibetan Himalayas lies a secret that would have saved Ponce de Leon from years of fruitless searching. There, generations of Buddhist monks have passed down a series of exercises with mystical, age-reversing properties. Known as the Five Rites, or the Five Tibetans, these exercises were introduced to Westerners in 1939 through a small book, *Ancient Secret of the Fountain of Youth* (revised edition from Harbor Press Inc., 1989). It describes the effect of these moves on a frail and elderly retired military officer named Colonel Bradford, who journeyed to Tibet to find the Shangri-la he'd heard described while serving in India with the British army.

THE FIRST MOVE (see

previous page) comes from the whirling dervishes, Sufi mystics who spin around at high speeds in ecstatic prayer rituals. The spinning is a very energizing motion, and you'll find it can be fun. Stand with your arms stretched out to your sides, hands at shoulder height and palms facing down. Spin around at a comfortable speed, clockwise. If you get dizzy, stop and rest. With practice, you'll get less dizzy each time.

THE SECOND MOVE

Lie on your back with your palms resting against the floor. Inhale, gently pull your chin toward your chest, point your toes, and lift both legs straight up, keeping your lower back pressed against the floor. Hold the pose for a few seconds. Now, exhale, and slowly lower your legs and your head to the starting position. Rest, then repeat. *Note:* Unless your abdominal muscles are fairly fit, you may feel some discomfort in your lower back when lifting your legs. Keep your knees bent while performing this move until your abdominals get stronger.



THE THIRD MOVE

Kneel on your mat, with the balls of your feet against the floor and your knees about four inches apart. Place your hands behind you with the palms resting against the tops of your legs, just below your buttocks. Keep your back straight, and allow your head to drop forward so that your chin is resting against your chest. Now, inhale through your nose and arch your back, pulling your shoulders back, lifting your head up and back, and opening your chest. Hold for a few seconds. Exhale, return to the starting position, and repeat.

After learning the exercises, he returned to the West and astonished friends and strangers with his youthful appearance.

Although the colonel's story may seem more Hollywood than historical, the Five Rites can be beneficial in many ways for people living in the modern world.

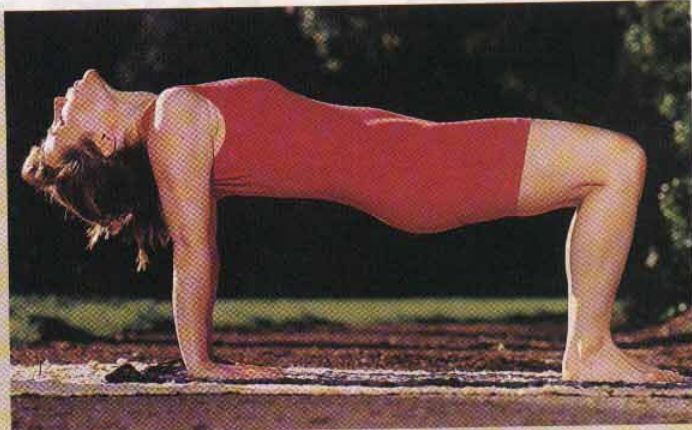
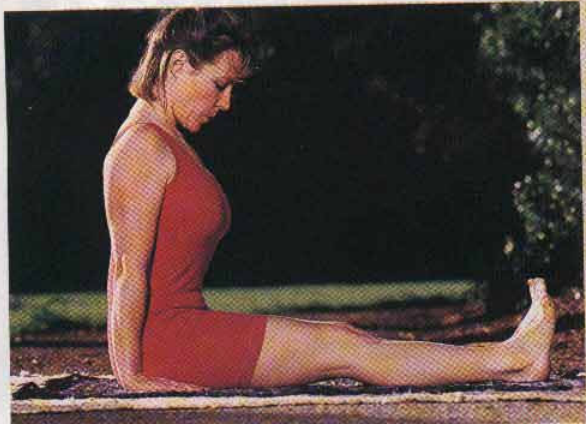
■ REAL BENEFITS

THE FIVE RITES ARE BASED on the Tibetan theory of the *chakras*, which are

seven centers or vortices of psychic energy located along the spinal column and corresponding to various glands and organ systems. Practicing the Five Rites stimulates the flow of energy throughout the body and encourages the chakras to function optimally, thus allowing the systems with which they are connected to perform as they should. When the chakra system is in order, the mind and body are balanced.

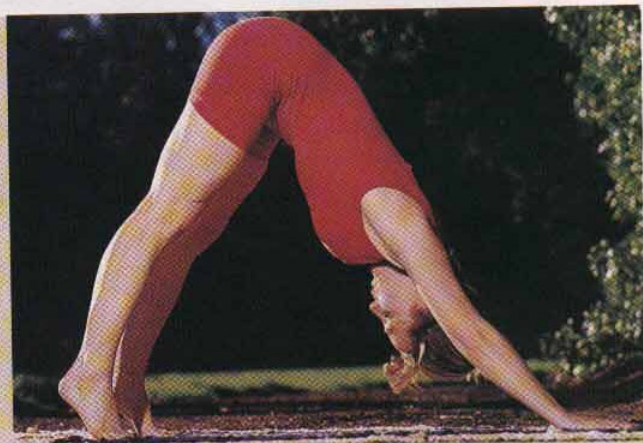
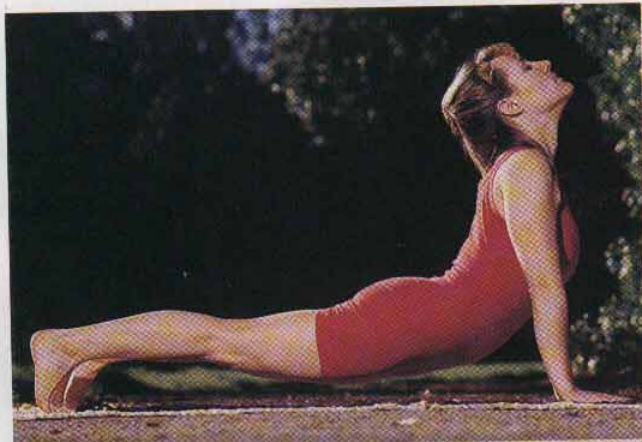
The rejuvenation theory comes into play when one compares the chakra activity of a young person to that of someone older. In a young person, the chakras spin at the same speed. But as we age, some of the chakras, overburdened by stress or other factors, slow down, and the seven vortices no longer work together in harmony. The result: localized deterioration, disease, and other symptoms of aging. The

CONTINUED ON PAGE 145



THE FOURTH MOVE

Sit with your legs in front of you, palms on the floor and fingers facing forward. Rest your chin against your chest. Inhale, and lift your buttocks and let your head drop back so that, in one smooth move, you've straightened your body from shoulders to knees to make a table. Your feet should be about six inches apart, your knees bent at a right angle, your chest and abdomen parallel to the floor, and your arms straight. Contract the muscles in your legs, buttocks, and abdomen and hold for a few seconds. Exhale, return to the starting position, and repeat. *Note:* It's important to keep your breathing steady and relaxed during this move. If you get winded, stop and rest.



THE FIFTH MOVE

Lie face down, and push your torso up so that you're supporting yourself on your hands. Both your hands and feet should be about two feet apart, and only your palms and the balls of your feet should be touching the floor. Tilt your head back and arch your back so that you're looking up and ahead. Now, inhale, and lift your hips straight up so that your legs and spine are both in straight lines and your body is forming two sides of a perfect triangle (the floor will be the third side). Hold for a few seconds, then exhale and return to the starting (push-up) position, and repeat. *Note:* If you have back problems, try this modification: Begin in the push-up position, then inhale, and move your buttocks back until they're almost resting on your heels, lowering your head toward your chest and keeping your arms straight.

Rejuvenation *continued from page 89*

Five Rites work to get the chakras spinning in sync again.

Practiced regularly, the Five Rites work wonders. For one thing, the moves are terrific for someone who exercises rarely or who would rather do exercises at home. They are easy to learn and master, and don't require lots of time or equipment. The Five Rites also work well as a counterpart to an aerobic exercise routine, providing gentle stretching and toning that many fitness strategies neglect. For example, if you like to run, power walk, or bicycle, adding the Five Rites to your routine can boost your performance by keeping your muscles supple and relaxed. And as you become more adept at the moves, you'll find that they can help strengthen your muscles as well.

In addition to their physiological benefits, the Five Rites also help your attitude. The exercises are both centering and energizing—just the thing to get a sleepy (or uninspired) body moving. And the Rites can also help your spiritual side, helping you to achieve a deeper focus in the practice of meditation.

Robert Sachs is a teacher and lecturer on preventive healthcare and stress management in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and author of *Health for Life: Secrets of Tibetan Ayurveda* (Clear Light Publishers, 1995). He has been performing the exercises for the past six years and credits them with increasing and stabilizing his energy levels—as well as keeping him looking young. “Unlike other forms of exercise, the Tibetan exercises are stimulating to the entire body,” he says, pointing out that they strengthen and tone major muscle groups as well as stretch and condition the spine and the muscles that surround it.

The Five Rites are particularly good for anyone who could use more energy. “I do the exercises first thing in the morning,” says Sachs. “Almost immediately, I noticed that I had more consistent energy throughout the day. And they're an excellent way to get yourself focused—tuned up—early in the day. You feel like you're really present, not just dragging yourself through the morning.” The exercises are particularly effective at developing mental clarity because, like other practices based on yoga, they involve mind as well as body, requiring you to think about what you're doing

and to focus your thoughts on breath and movement. But a big advantage of the Tibetan exercises over other yoga routines is the amount of time they require: roughly twenty minutes per day.

“There are very few exercises, with the exception of a full tai chi series or advanced hatha yoga, that will give you these same all-over benefits,” Sachs relates. “And someone who has very little time will get more from these exercises than from any other series of exercises I've seen.”

And the spiritual lift—the ability to achieve a deep level of meditation after performing the Rites—is perhaps the most important benefit of all, says Sachs. “The exercises provide rejuvenation at many levels, and can be very energizing. But you should use the energy you get from doing them for a higher purpose. The point of being rejuvenated is not to have a body that lasts one thousand years, but to keep it healthy so that you can do something useful with it.”

WHEN AND WHERE

ALTHOUGH YOU CAN do these exercises at any time, most experts advise performing the series first thing in the morning. They'll help you put yourself into the right frame of mind to face the challenges of your day.

You should perform each exercise twenty-one times, although most beginners will need several sessions to build up to this number. To begin with, try to complete ten or twelve repetitions of each move. The first exercise is energizing, and the remaining four work to elongate the spine and stretch and tone the muscles. To get started, simply clear a spot on the floor that's at least four or five feet square, and find a comfortable mat or towel to use in the second through fifth exercises. To get the best results, visualize yourself doing the exercises perfectly, and rest in between moves to allow your breathing to return to normal and to let your mind process what you've done. After you've completed each move, stand quietly with your hands on your hips for a moment or two. Take two breaths, in through the nose and out through the mouth, and then proceed to the next exercise. □

Martha Schindler is senior editor of NATURAL HEALTH.

RESOURCES

■ Health for Life: Secrets of Tibetan Ayurveda

by Robert Sachs
Clear Light Publishers
Santa Fe, NM,
1995

■ The Five Tibetans

by Christopher S. Kilham
Healing Arts Press
Rochester, VT,
1994

Quick Reference Chart

No. 1



No. 2



No. 3



No. 4



No. 5

Until you become familiar with the five rites, this chart will remind you how each rite is done, and the order in which the rites are performed.