

Tai Chi: A Gentle Path to Fitness

Learn more about this “moving meditation”.



Chinese monks first used tai chi as a mind-body exercise. They used it to improve concentration and physical well-being. Today, some people may turn to it to help manage stress.

Tai chi is sometimes called moving meditation. Its graceful and precise body movements can enhance balance, strength and coordination. It can also help you have better body awareness. Tai chi's movements are said to align the body. They improve flexibility and increase energy flow, called “qi.” Some people say it gives them a sense of inner peace. In older adults, tai chi has shown some benefit for cognitive and motor function.

Tai chi combines breathing exercises with slow, gentle movements. It's an activity for all age groups and all levels of fitness. It is ideal for just about anyone. Children, adults of all ages or people with disabilities can do tai chi. Many of the movements can be adapted and performed in a sitting position.

Benefits of tai chi

Tai chi is performed very slowly and is not strenuous if done correctly. As such, it provides many benefits and rarely results in injury. Benefits of tai chi may include:

- Increased bone health
- Cardiopulmonary fitness

- Increased quality of life
- Improved self-confidence
- Improved balance and fall prevention
- Improved strength, movement and flexibility

As with any activity, your muscles may be sore when you first start tai chi. You may need to modify or stay away from some of the movements if you are pregnant or have certain health conditions.

If you're pregnant, physically inactive or have a health condition such as arthritis, diabetes or heart disease, check with your doctor before starting an exercise program or increasing your activity level. He or she can tell you what types and amounts of activities are safe for you.

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Sources

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