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Tai chi: Discover the many possible health benefits Why give tai chi a try

Like other complementary and alternative practices that bring mind and body together, tai chi can help reduce stress. During tai chi, you focus on movement and breathing. This combination creates a state of relaxation and calm. Stress, anxiety and tension should melt away as you focus on the present, and the effects may last well after you stop your tai chi session. Tai chi also might help your overall health, although it's not a substitute for traditional medical care.

Despite its long history, tai chi has been studied scientifically only in recent years. And although more research is needed, preliminary evidence suggests that tai chi may offer numerous benefits beyond stress reduction, including:

- Reducing anxiety and depression
- Improving balance, flexibility and muscle strength
- Reducing falls in older adults
- Improving sleep quality
- Lowering blood pressure
- Improving cardiovascular fitness in older adult
- Relieving chronic pain
- Increasing energy, endurance and agility
- Improving overall feelings of well-being

Getting started with tai chi

Wondering how to get started in tai chi? Even though you can rent or buy videos or books about tai chi, consider seeking guidance from a qualified tai chi instructor to gain the full benefits and learn proper techniques. A tai chi instructor may also be able to teach you about the philosophy underlying this relaxation technique.

A tai chi instructor can teach you specific positions and how to regulate your breathing. An instructor also can teach you how to practice tai chi safely, especially if you have injuries, chronic conditions, or balance or coordination problems. Although tai chi is slow and gentle, with virtually no negative side effects, it's possible to get injured if you don't know how to do tai chi properly. It's possible you could strain your muscles or overdo it when first learning, or you could aggravate an existing condition. And if you have balance problems, you could possibly fall during tai chi.

You can find tai chi classes in many communities today. To find a

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