

Tai Chi: Low-Impact Activity

When weather turns cooler it is often hard to get outside to walk. Tai Chi can be a good substitute for any outdoor physical activity. Tai Chi is an ancient martial art that is now practiced for health improvement. Tai Chi combines low-impact movement with mental focus, making it an ideal activity for less active people to begin moving their bodies more. Beginners start with simple movements that progress to more difficulty.

Tai Chi involves slow and gentle movement of body weight and deep breathing. The only equipment needed is comfortable clothes and flat, flexible shoes. Suitable for all ages, Tai Chi can be done inside or outside, alone or with a group. Although one can learn by a video or book, learning with an instructor is most beneficial because the instructor can observe one's technique and guide one's progress while preventing injury.

Research has indicated that people who practice Tai Chi several times weekly may receive many health benefits such as:

- Improved balance
- Strengthened muscles
- Flexibility
- Stress relief
- Immune system boost
- Pain relief from arthritis and fibromyalgia
- Improved mental focus
- Reduced risk of falling for elderly
- Improved breathing capacity
- Improved cardio-vascular health
- Lower blood pressure
- Better sleep quality
- Improved sense of well being

Before beginning Tai Chi, as with any exercise program, consult with your physician if you have a chronic health condition.

For more information read *Tai Chi: An Introduction* at <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/taichi/introduction.htm>.

Sources:

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