

Linda's T'ai Chi

Harvard University Study

Weekly Hand-out sometime in 2017

The health benefits of Tai Chi

This gentle form of exercise can help maintain strength, flexibility, and balance, and could be the perfect activity for the rest of your life.

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Tai chi is often described as "meditation in motion," but it might well be called "*medication* in motion." There is growing evidence that this mind-body practice, which originated in China as a martial art, has value in treating or preventing many health problems. And you can get started even if you aren't in top shape or the best of health.

In this low-impact, slow-motion exercise, you go without pausing through a series of motions named for animal actions — for example, "white crane spreads its wings" — or martial arts moves, such as "box both ears." As you move, you breathe deeply and naturally, focusing your attention — as in some kinds of meditation — on your bodily sensations.

Tai chi differs from other types of exercise in several respects. The movements are usually circular and never forced, the muscles are relaxed rather than tense, the joints are not fully extended, and connective tissues are not stretched. Tai chi can be easily adapted for anyone, from the fit to people confined to wheelchairs or recovering from surgery.

Keys to gaining benefits from your Tai Chi practice

1. Breathe deeply- IN through your nose and OUT through your mouth.
2. Keep your knees, elbow slightly bent
3. Keep muscles relaxed- do not tense your muscles
4. Stand tall from the waist- lead with your belly button
5. Keep your knees OVER your toes. To accomplish this, you will have to open your knees in a "rides the horse" stance.

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6. Watch your hands. Stay focused on the here and now.
7. Lower your shoulders- never raise your shoulders or “hunch” your shoulders