

Get in step with tai chi

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(HealthDay)—If you're looking for a low-impact exercise that can have a big impact on your quality of life, give Tai Chi a try. This ancient Chinese practice combines slow, flowing movement with meditation and

deep breathing.

According to the U.S. National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, studies show that Tai Chi is very good at improving muscle strength, flexibility and balance. That's a plus as you age because good balance can keep you steady on your feet and prevent falls.

Tai Chi also may help improve medical conditions like arthritis and [high blood pressure](#). It also may be an effective way for women to stave off osteoporosis after menopause.

Tai Chi's benefits also go beyond the physical. It can lower stress and anxiety and help you get a good night's sleep. Because Tai Chi is low impact, it's easy on your joints, and people of almost any ability level can usually participate.

But, of course, check with your doctor first. Make sure you weave Tai Chi into your overall fitness plan. You'll probably need to continue your regular cardio since most Tai Chi workouts don't raise your heart rate much.

There are several ways to try out Tai Chi.

Videos and books can help you get started in the privacy of your own home. However, it's best to get some instruction from a trained practitioner.

Taking a Tai Chi class can also add an important social component to your life. Before signing up, you may first want to observe the group and make sure you're comfortable with the style of the Tai Chi teacher and the general atmosphere of the class.

More information: The U.S. National Center for Complementary and

Integrative Health has more on [Tai Chi](#) and Qi Gong, another ancient practice.

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