

Study suggests tai chi is better at reducing high blood pressure than aerobic exercise

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A large team of medical researchers affiliated with several institutions in China reports that volunteers engaging regularly in tai chi for one year saw greater reductions in their systolic blood pressure than did

volunteers engaging for one year in aerobic exercises. Their study is [published](#) in the journal *JAMA Network Open*.

Prehypertension is a condition leading to hypertension, another name for chronic high blood pressure. Prior research has suggested that aerobic exercises (those that increase breathing and [heart rate](#)) can head off the development of hypertension in those with prehypertension. There have also been reports of tai chi having much the same effect.

For this new study, the researchers wanted to learn more about the impact of both activities over an entire year. To that end, they recruited 349 adult volunteers with prehypertension. The group was split approximately in half, with one subgroup committing to doing tai chi for one hour four times a week for a year, and the other subgroup doing [aerobic exercises](#) with the same frequency. The researchers took blood pressure measurements at the beginning of the study, at six months and then at 12 months.

The researchers found that tai chi had a more significant impact on reducing blood pressure than aerobic exercise. More specifically, they found that those volunteers in the tai chi group saw changes of -7.01 mmHg compared to -4.61 mmHg for those in the aerobic exercise group when tested in an office setting and walking on a treadmill.

They also found greater reductions in the tai chi group when testing the volunteer's blood pressure as they slept. In continuing to monitor the volunteers after the conclusion of the study, they found that fewer of those people who had been in the tai chi group progressed to [hypertension](#) than did those in the aerobic exercise group.

More information: Xinye Li et al, Effect of Tai Chi vs Aerobic Exercise on Blood Pressure in Patients With Prehypertension, *JAMA Network Open* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.54937](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.54937)

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