

Tai Chi for Fall Prevention

What Is Tai Chi?

Tai Chi is an internal martial art that integrates the mind, body and spirit. Its movements are slow, smooth, continuous and circular. Combined with the focused breathing technique, it releases stress and anxiety, and is used mainly as a gentle exercise.

- Tai = Supreme/Vast
- Chi/ ji= Ultimate/ Universe
- Chaun/quan = Fist
- Qi=Life Energy/ Life Force / Breath
- Gong = work/ exercise/ movement
- QiGong = Breath work with gentle movement

WHY TAI CHI

It is an enjoyable exercise proven to prevent falls, at the same time, improves almost all aspects of health.

1. The Healthy Body

Studies have shown tai chi improves muscle strength, flexibility, cardiovascular fitness, balance, and more.

2. The Healthy Mind

It is equally important to have a healthy mind as well as a healthy body. Older adults who are more confident in their balance have less chance of falling! Tai Chi, a mind/body exercise, brings serenity and confidence.

3. The Scientific Evidence

The Gillespie review analyzed 111 scientific papers and found tai chi to be one of the most effective exercises to prevent falls. Studies abound about the positive effects of tai chi on prevention and maintenance of conditions ranging from cancer, stroke, Parkinson's, to diabetes, arthritis, fall prevention and more.

Recognized by the CDC as Effective For Falls Prevention

- The TCA form is recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) effective for Fall Prevention
- The CDC recommends taking a tai chi class that is tailored to the needs of older adults and is offered at least TWICE a week.
- Needs to be practiced for at least 50 hours to reduce fall risk.
- Improves balance and reduces the risk of falling.
- Practice using the principles

- According to the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 4 adults over the age of 65 falls each year
- Injuries from falls, especially in older adults, are the most expensive health cost in developed countries.
- Tai Chi is evidence based as effective at reducing fall risk.
- TCAFP is one of the programs recommended by the CDC and health departments around the world for fall prevention because it was shown by the world's largest study to prevent falls in older adults.

How Does it Work?

What are the most important ways that TCAFP works for Fall Prevention?

- As an exercise, it exercises the whole body – all of the muscles and joints
 - Stronger muscles protect the joints and reduce pain
 - Improve balance and reduce the risk of falling
 - Improves flexibility that reduces stiffness and allows us to do more daily tasks
 - Improves cardiovascular fitness, which benefits the entire body
 - Improves immunity
 - Over 500 medical studies show that tai chi improves almost all aspects of health
- Mentally: mind-body exercise
 - Reduce stress and calm the mind
 - Socialization
 - Empowerment
 - Encourage the adoption of other healthy habits
- Qigong – to make the magic happen!
 - Build up more qi
 - Circulate the qi
 - Mind-Body-Spirit connection

Dosage and Fidelity

The TCAFP program is recognized by many governmental departments around the world.

- Administration for Community Living labeled the TCAFP program as a Title III-D evidence-based falls prevention program.

Dosage – what our participants need to do based on our well-known studies

- Participants must attend a minimum of 16 hours of tai chi lessons either in person or virtual
 - Attend 1 hour per week x 16 weeks
 - Attend 2 hours per week x 8 weeks

- Must attend at least 1 class per week and be encouraged to practice at home

Research Shows the Program Works Because:

- **Tai Chi is a weight bearing exercise & therefore increases leg strength. We work large & small muscle groups that support the joints making them more stable.**
- **Tai Chi improves sensory deficits-especially on the bottom of the feet (diabetic neuropathy). With regular tai chi practice, these sensors improve giving the body a better sense of where it is in space & what direction it is moving.**
- **Nero Muscular Coordination-tai chi improves reaction time, reflex actions & coordination. It trains us to be in the moment-it improves our reaction time because our mind & body are connected. What we are doing has a clear focus.**
- **Cognitive Improvement-**The Fear of Falling is one of the leading causes of falls. The body tenses up when afraid, not confident. Tai Chi improves confidence in two ways: 1. repetitive practice of movements (walking, balance, upright posture...), 2. The tai chi breathing allows for relaxation. This improves confidence & reduces the anxiety of falling.**
- **Reduces Pain – This is especially good for those with Osteoarthritis and Rheumatoid Arthritis. Pain is a distractor for our ability to perform ADL, awareness and is a distractor. Pain medications can affect movement, balance, & mental focus. Tai Chi has been proven to reduce pain & stress in life.**

Tai Chi Principles – the *secret* to tai chi

- **Control of outward movement**
 - Movements should be slow, smooth and continuous
 - Moving against a gentle resistance
- **Body structure**
 - Supple upright body posture
 - Conscious weight transfer
- **Internal components**
 - Loosen or song your joints.
 - Jing – mental focus on the present situation and your movements
- **Dan Tian Breathing Method**

For more information on Tai Chi for Health Programs visit www.tchi.org

BeckyRahe
taichibr@gmail.com