



Geriatrics

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How to Do Tai Chi

If you're new to exercise or looking for a form of physical fitness that's easy on your body and benefits your mind, you might be wondering if [tai chi](#) is right for you. Otherwise known as meditation in motion, tai chi is an ancient Chinese tradition based in martial arts that is now a popular low-impact exercise method involving slow movements and breath.

Tai chi moves

There are many styles of tai chi to choose from that typically share a common foundation, but may differ in appearance and training methods. Some of these styles include Chen, Yang, Wu and Sun.

When you begin the practice of tai chi, you'll see that it is not about each move, but more about a series of fluid motions. In fact, there are [108 moves](#) that are all in motion, which is why tai chi is called "moving meditation."

To get a better idea of how to do tai chi, plus, the many benefits that come from a regular practice, watch this [video](#) from the founder of Taoist Tai Chi, Master Moy Lin Shin, demonstrating the movements in motion.

<https://www.healthline.com/health/exercise-fitness/tai-chi-moves#for-older-adults>

How to get started

If you're ready to give tai chi a try, you might be wondering how to get started. Here are a few tips that will point you in the right direction.

- **Find an instructor:** The best way to learn and practice tai chi is with an instructor. You can look for classes at senior centers, local fitness facilities, the YMCA, or tai chi centers. If you're unable to locate any on your own, try [searching online](#).
- **Watch the class first:** Talk to the instructor ahead of time about observing the class before you commit. This allows you to see the moves in action and get a feel for the class. If you can, try to talk with a few of the participants to see how they like doing tai chi.
- **Check out YouTube:** Beyond the more formal videos you can find online, YouTube is also home to some great clips on [different tai chi moves](#).

Benefits

The benefits of tai chi encompass everything from mental, physical, and emotional benefits to spiritual and healing benefits. While not an exhaustive list, the following are some of the more well-known mental and physical benefits of tai chi.

- **It's a safe and effective form of physical fitness for beginners.** If you're new to exercise or just new to this form of fitness, the slow, low-impact movements are safe and gentle on your body, and help increase flexibility and posture.
- **It helps manage stress-related anxiety** by integrating the relaxation and stretching benefits right into the movement. You'll learn how to relax and move slowly through the movements while breathing.
- **It may help improve your mood.** [Researchers Trusted Source](#) have found that tai chi may be effective in reducing depressive symptoms, anxiety, and mood disorders.
- **You'll have better sleep.** Practicing tai chi on a regular basis may contribute to a more [restful sleep cycle](#). [Trusted Source](#)

- **It's adaptable.** Tai chi is both gentle and slow, which makes it easily adaptable to many fitness levels and health conditions.
- **You'll sit up straighter.** Through the slow and deliberate flow of the moves, the practice of tai chi helps [improve posture and body alignment](#).
- **It eases pain.** Engaging in tai chi can improve the symptoms that result from fibromyalgia. A [2018 study](#)[Trusted Source](#) showed that tai chi offered more pain relief than other exercises recommended for people with fibromyalgia.

Tai chi for seniors

Tai chi is one of the more popular [methods of movement for seniors](#). That's why both active seniors and those new to fitness can benefit from the low-impact moves taught in this gentle form of exercise.

- **Increases body awareness.** Known as slow-motion exercise, tai chi encourages slow and deliberate body movements accompanied by deep breathing. This combination helps seniors focus on the way their body moves and allows them to pay attention and address any discomfort they may be feeling.
- **Improves cognition.** A small [2018 study](#) showed a connection between the practice of tai chi and improvements in cognition for seniors with mild cognitive impairment. This is promising news for older adults looking to improve their memory and executive functioning skills.
- **Reduces risk and fear of falling.** Maintaining good balance, flexibility, and coordination become more important the older you get. While most physical activities, especially weight-bearing exercise, can help seniors maintain and even improve their mobility, activities such as tai chi also [reduce the risk and fear of falling](#)[Trusted Source](#) in older adults by improving balance and motor function.
- **Eases arthritis pain.** Seniors with chronic pain from [conditions like arthritis](#)[Trusted Source](#) may experience a reduction in symptoms by following a regular practice of tai chi.

Cautions

Even though tai chi is considered one of the safer forms of physical fitness, it's still a good idea to talk with your doctor before trying something new, especially if you have any existing medical conditions.

While participating in a tai chi class, if you feel dizzy or faint, stop what you're doing and sit down. If the feeling continues, make sure to check-in with your doctor.