

What is Tai Chi?

Tai chi – an art embracing the mind, body and spirit



Synopsis

Originating in ancient China, tai chi is one of the most effective exercises for health of mind and body. Although an art with great depth of knowledge and skill, it can be easy to learn and soon delivers its health benefits. For many, it continues as a lifetime journey.

There are many styles and forms of tai chi, the major ones being Chen, Yang, Wu, Wu (different words in Chinese) and Sun. Each style has its own features, but all styles share the same essential principles.

The essential principles include mind integrated with the body; control of movements and breathing; generating internal energy, mindfulness, song (loosening 松) and jing (serenity 静). The ultimate purpose of tai chi is cultivate the qi or life energy within us to flow smoothly and powerfully throughout the body. Total harmony of the inner and outer self comes from the integration of mind and body, empowered through healthy qi through the practice of tai chi. [Tai Chi for Health programs](#) are modernized tai chi incorporating medical science to deliver health benefits more quickly.

Just what is tai chi?

There is much more to tai chi than one can see, and virtually no one can describe such a complex art in one simple sentence. Yes, it's aesthetically pleasing, easy and enjoyable to practice. It can be a meditation and an integral exercise for all parts of the body and the mind. It brings tranquility and helps you think more clearly. Tai chi can be many things for different people; regular practice will bring better health and wellness. The flowing movements of tai chi contain much inner strength, like water flowing in a river, beneath the tranquil surface there is a current with immense power—the power for healing and wellness.

With consistent practice, people will be able to feel the internal energy (qi 氣), convert it to internal force (jing 勁) and use it to generate more internal energy. This process

would greatly enhance tai chi development, leading to a more balanced mental state; at the same time your fitness, agility and balance will improve. The unique feature of tai chi is that it is internal. Internal means building the inner strength from inside out, therefore you can continue to develop at any age.

[Numerous studies](#) have shown tai chi improves muscular strength, flexibility, fitness, improve immunity, relieve pain and improve quality of life. Muscle strength is important for supporting and protecting joints and is essential for normal physical function. Flexibility exercises enable people to move more easily, and facilitate circulation of body fluid and blood, which enhance healing. Fitness is important for overall functioning of the heart, lungs, and muscles. In addition to these components, tai chi movements emphasize weight transference to improve balance and prevent falls. Aside from the health benefits, tai chi runs deep and strong. It's easy to learn and becomes a way of life for many practitioners. Yet, because of its depth, no one ever knows it all, and thereby lies the fascination and the never-ending challenge of the art. There will be times, no matter how brief, when a practitioner will enter a mental stage of tranquility, moving to a different world, time, and space, a world where there is no schedule, no hustle and bustle. Yet the person still feels very much a part of the world. In a non-religious sense, it's a spiritual experience. Such an experience is so satisfying that it is beyond words. Being part of the world, being in harmony with the world and nature, thus is the paradox of tai chi, health and beyond.