

## **Benefits of Tai Chi**

A growing body of research has investigated how Tai Chi, classified under Traditional Chinese or Alternative Medicine, can treat and improve quality of life in those with a wide array of conditions across numerous populations. Studies have been conducted with children, adults and the elderly, as well as people with Parkinson's disease, diabetes, osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia, back pain, cardiovascular disease and HIV/AIDS. While more research is needed, the benefits of Tai Chi appear to be associated with enhanced mental and physical health, sleep and reduced stress. These benefits include:

### **1. Mood elevator**

Reducing stress and anxiety is one of the main reasons students start and stick with Tai Chi. In today's frenzied world, the moving meditation provides an opportunity to slow down and use the body to relax and clear the mind.

### **2. Headache relief**

According to the National Headache Foundation, over 45 million Americans suffer from chronic headaches. A UCLA, randomized controlled study looking at the impact of Tai Chi on adults with tension-type headaches (TTH) found that participants enrolled in a 15-week Tai Chi program experienced a statistically significant decrease in the number of headaches. Improvements in energy, social functioning, emotional well-being and mental health were also observed.

### **3. Balance and stability**

Some of the most impressive research on Tai Chi has focused on enhancing balance and preventing falls, especially in the elderly. Several studies have shown significant improvements in balance, especially in participants who were sedentary or at risk for falls. Tai Chi has also been shown to increase strength and flexibility, both of which can help prevent to falls.

### **4. Bone density**

Concerned about bone health? Even though practicing involves little weight-bearing exercise and no resistance, several randomized controlled trials in post-menopausal women found Tai Chi reduced bone loss and fractures.

## **5. Blood pressure**

Several studies have found that practicing Tai Chi significantly lowers blood pressure. Research published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* found that practicing Tai Chi for 12 weeks decreased blood pressure and improved both lipid profile and anxiety status.

## **6. Heart health**

Tai Chi has also been found to lower heart rate and increase heart rate variability (the time interval between heartbeats that can measure how well one tolerates stress). Tai Chi, which is a form of aerobic exercise, may also improve your VO2 max—a measure linked to overall fitness.

## **7. Aging**

Tai Chi can help reverse changes in physical function that naturally decline with age. It has been shown to improve strength, fitness and overall capacity for daily living.

## **8. Osteoarthritis**

Tai Chi may offer some relief for osteoarthritis, a degenerative joint disease causing stiffness, pain and mild inflammation. One study published in *Arthritis and Rheumatism* found that compared to controls, subjects with knee osteoarthritis who did Tai Chi twice a week had less pain and improved physical function.

Not only is Tai Chi an effective therapeutic tool that is increasingly used in integrative medicine, it is enjoyable and safe. The only thing one needs to succeed is to start and continue to practice.