

Tai Chi for Falls Prevention

This document provides basic information about Tai Chi programs, including program elements, requirements, and instructor training.

What is Tai Chi?

Tai Chi is a graceful form of exercise that involves a series of movements, known as forms, which are performed in a slow, focused manner combined with controlled breathing. It is a low impact exercise that puts minimal stress on muscles and joints, making it suitable for many older adults. Tai Chi does not require special equipment and can be practiced indoors or outdoors, either alone or in a group. Many communities offer Tai Chi classes.

How Does Tai Chi Help Prevent Falls?

Tai Chi has been shown to:

- Improve balance
- Increase leg strength
- Reduce fear of falling
- Improve mobility
- Increase flexibility
- Improve psychological health

For these reasons, Tai Chi is recommended to prevent falls among older adults. It is most beneficial as a way to reduce fall risk when practiced for **at least 50 hours cumulatively**. This could mean taking a one-hour class twice a week for six months, or three times a week for four months. When a person stops practicing Tai Chi, the physical benefits slowly disappear over time.

What Does a Tai Chi Class for Fall Prevention look like?

To get the most fall prevention benefit from Tai Chi classes, adults age 65 and older should:

- Attend Tai Chi classes at least twice a week and participate actively in class.
- Practice Tai Chi regularly for a total of 50 hours or more.
- Maintain an upright (straight) posture at all times to reduce the chances of falling.

What Should Instructors and Program Planners Keep in Mind When Teaching Older Adults?

- Classes should include relaxation and exercises with a lowered center of gravity.
- An average class size of 12-15 students is ideal for effective learning and teaching.
- Tai Chi movements should be introduced gradually, especially those that require participants to bend their knees.
- Incremental movement is needed in teaching older people.
- Tai Chi can also be used in rehabilitative settings where the emphasis is on retraining balance in older adults.
- Some participants may have medical or physical conditions that may limit their ability to perform certain Tai Chi movements.

How Long Should You Practice Tai Chi?

Research indicates that Tai Chi decreases falls and improves functional balance and mobility when practiced regularly for at least 50 hours over time. This practice dosage can be accomplished by taking a one-hour class twice a week for six months or three times a week for four months. In other words, the style of Tai Chi is less important than the cumulative length of time this type of exercise is practiced.

Where Can Manuals for Tai Chi Programs be Obtained?*

Many Tai Chi programs have been developed and researched for their therapeutic qualities. For those interested in implementing a community Tai Chi program, the following Tai Chi programs have an older adult focus and have program manuals available. Please note, this is not an exhaustive list of available Tai Chi programs.

- ***Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance:***
 - Contact: Dr. Fuzhong Li (fuzhongl@ori.org) or Lisa Marion (lm Marion@ori.org)
 - Website: <http://tjqmbb.org/>
- ***YMCA Moving for Better Balance:***
 - Contact your local [YMCA](#)
- ***Tai Chi for Arthritis:***
 - Contact: Dr. Paul Lam (DrPaulLam@taichiforhealthinstitute.org)
 - Website: Tai Chi Institute for Health at <http://taichiforhealthinstitute.org/programs/tai-chi-for-arthritis/>
- ***Tai Chi Fundamentals:***
 - Contact: Tricia Yu (tyu@taichihealth.com)
 - Website: <http://taichihealth.com/wp/>

What Training Options are Available for the Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance (TJQMBB)?

Different TJQMBB training options are available, namely through instructors authorized by Dr. Fuzhong Li, other independent trainers, and through the YMCA network.

1. Authorized TJQMBB Trainers*

- LinLin Choy, private instructor based in Oregon: linlinchoy@gmail.com
- David Fink, Program Developer, Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging, North St. Paul, MN: dfink@tcaging.org
- Dawna Pidgeon, PT, Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, Lebanon, NH: dawna.m.pidgeon@hitchcock.org

2. YMCA Moving for Better Balance Instructor Training

The YMCA of USA offers a Moving for Better Balance (MBB) 12-week program, which is based on Dr. Fuzhong Li's TJQMBB program. If you are interested in being trained as a YMCA MBB program instructor, contact your local [YMCA](#) to discuss the process.

3. Other TJQMBB Trainers*

- Robert Nations, University of California at San Diego: contact@nations-acupuncture.com

What Training Options are Available for the Tai Chi for Arthritis Program?

The Tai Chi for Health [website](#) provides in-depth information on becoming an instructor, senior trainer, or master trainer in Tai Chi for Health programs. There are currently 23 master trainers in the U.S. who can certify instructors in the Tai Chi for Health programs.

- For a list of workshops being conducted by master trainers, visit <http://taichiforhealthinstitute.org/workshops/master-trainers-workshop-calendar/> .
- For a list of Dr. Lam's training workshops, visit <http://taichiforhealthinstitute.org/workshops/dr-lams-workshop-calendar/>.

What Training Options are Available for Tai Chi Fundamentals?

- For a list of certified instructors, visit http://taichihealth.com/?page_id=100
- For a list of training workshops, visit http://taichihealth.com/wp/?post_type=tribe_events

This information has been adapted by the National Falls Prevention Resource Center from materials previously developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

*The instructors referenced above have given their permission to be contacted about their programs.

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