

YMCA Moving for Better Balance

Program Summary

Description

Moving for Better Balance is a 12-week evidence-based, instructor-led group program designed to improve strength, mobility, flexibility, and balance for enhanced overall physical health and better functioning in daily activities. Participation in the program may also result in better mental health, reduced stress, improved memory and cognition, and increased self-esteem. The program, based on the principles of Tai Chi, teaches eight movements modified especially for falls prevention. Participants meet twice per week in a safe and comfortable learning environment; each session is led by a qualified instructor. Participants are also encouraged to complete 2+ hours of at-home practice each week. The program is targeted toward individuals 65 years or older who are physically mobile with impaired stability and/or mobility, or individuals 45 years or older with a condition that may impact stability and/or mobility.

Program Website: Contact your local [YMCA](#).

Program Goal

Participants in Moving for Better Balance are working to achieve at least 50 hours of practice in tai-chi based movements, through class instruction and at-home practice.

Essential Program Components and Activities

The program teaches eight Tai Chi-based movements modified especially for falls prevention over the course of 12 weeks. Participants meet twice per week in a safe and comfortable learning environment and conduct 2+ hours of at-home practice each week. Each session is led by a qualified instructor.

Reasoning Behind the Program Design and Elements

Moving for Better Balance was developed by Fuzhong Li, PhD at the Oregon Research Institute with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. According to the CDC, each year more than 1.5 million Americans will have a stroke or heart attack, which may result in impaired balance and mobility. Research has shown that Tai Chi-based programs like Moving for Better Balance may aid rehabilitation for those age 45 or older with heart disease.¹ Research has also shown that participants in Tai Chi classes had fewer falls, fewer fall injuries, and their risk of falling was decreased by 55 percent.²

Target Population(s)

The target audience for Moving for Better Balance is as follows:

- Adults 65 years or older who are physically mobile, with impaired stability and/or mobility.
- Adults 45 years or older with a chronic condition that may impact stability and/or mobility.
- A YMCA membership is not required to participate in the program.

Length/Timeframe of the Program

Moving for Better Balance is a 12-week program that includes 2 class sessions per week and 2+ hours of at-home practice per week.

Recommended Class Size

A class size of 10 to 12 participants is best. With a larger room and an experienced instructor (three plus years of teaching), a class size of 12 to 15 students may also be appropriate.

Desired Outcomes

The following are participation requirements for Moving for Better Balance. Participants must:

- Participate in Moving for Better Balance for a minimum of **50 hours**. This can be achieved through:

One 12 week class that meets twice a week for 60-90 minutes AND includes documented at home practice for two or more hours per week.

- Participants must attend at least one in-person class before practicing at home.
- Participants should record home practice time in a log book with date, time, and length of practice.

Measures and Evaluation Activities, e.g., Fidelity Checks

Y-USA works with local Ys to ensure they are delivering the program with fidelity and only reports national program outcomes for Ys who have submitted the commitment pledge.

Health Outcomes and Evidence Supporting Health Outcomes

Moving for Better Balance has been shown to:

- Improve balance and stability
- Increase muscle strength
- Improve flexibility
- Increase mobility
- Improve memory and cognition
- Improve self-confidence
- Reduce stress
- Improve mental and emotional well-being
- Prevent falls

Program Costs

For more information about program costs, please contact your local YMCA.

Program Savings

A cost-benefit analysis of return on investment (ROI) for falls prevention programs showed that the Tai chi: Moving For Better Balance program had a net benefit per participants of \$529.86 and an ROI of 509%.³

Resource Requirements

Facilities

Moving for Better Balance can be delivered anywhere in the community where there is an open space available for instruction. The room should have adequate lighting, smooth floors (e.g., made of wood or linoleum), and chairs for participants to use if needed.

Equipment and Materials

Moving for Better Balance requires that chairs are available for participants if needed. Instructors will provide participants with an at-home practice tracker at the beginning of the session.

Training Requirements

Instructors/Leaders

Instructors must successfully complete the Y-certified Moving for Better Balance instructor training and pre-requisites before leading their first class. Instructors must use the curriculum approved by Y-USA and commit to maintaining fidelity requirements as outlined in the Moving for Better Balance Commitment Pledge. If you are interested in being trained as a Moving For Better Balance program instructor, contact your local [YMCA](#) to learn if they are currently offering the program and are recruiting new instructors.

- Instructor certification is required. For more information about the instructor qualifications, please contact your local YMCA.
- One instructor is needed per class.

References

1. Taylor-Piliae, R. E., et al. (2012). Tai Chi as an adjunct physical activity for adults aged 45 years and older enrolled in phase III cardiac rehabilitation. *European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing*, 11(1), 34-43.
2. Stevens JA. *Compendium of Effective Fall Interventions: What Works for Community-Dwelling Older Adults*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention (2010).
3. Carande-Kulis, V., et al., A cost–benefit analysis of three older adult fall prevention interventions, *Journal of Safety Research* (2015), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jsr.2014.12.007>.