

## Where can I learn more about Tai Chi?

### National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine

<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/taichi/introduction.htm>

### Harvard Health Publication

[http://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletters/Harvard\\_Womens\\_Health\\_Watch/2009/May/The-health-benefits-of-tai-chi](http://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletters/Harvard_Womens_Health_Watch/2009/May/The-health-benefits-of-tai-chi)

### Susan G. Komen

<http://ww5.komen.org/BreastCancer/Taichi.html>

### Breastcancer.org

[http://www.breastcancer.org/treatment/comp\\_med/types/tai\\_chi](http://www.breastcancer.org/treatment/comp_med/types/tai_chi)

**Please consult with your healthcare provider before starting any complementary therapy.**

# Tai Chi

## An Overview



Prepared by



**COMMUNITY  
CANCER  
CONNECTIONS**

1305 N. Martin Ave.  
Tucson, AZ 85721  
(520) 626-6151



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
**College of Nursing**

## What is tai chi?

**Tai Chi is often referred to as a “moving meditation”. In Tai Chi, participants purposefully move their bodies while maintaining continual awareness of their breath and posture.** Tai Chi practice helps a person live in the present, paying attention to the movement and their breath, rather than thinking about what is going to happen in the future or what occurred in the past.

Tai Chi began in China as a martial art, as a means of self-defense. Though there are conflicting accounts of its origins, popular belief credits a Taoist monk with developing 13 exercises that mimic animal movements. **The Tai Chi movements, relaxed breathing, and mindful attention support the flow of qi or life force; which in turn helps to balance yin and yang, which are oppositional yet complementary forces in the body.**

## Why should I use tai chi?

**The effects of Tai Chi in various patient populations have been studied in multiple clinical trials.** There are currently over 35 systematic reviews that summarize the results across various studies. Conditions that have been studied include but are not limited to cancer, heart disease, stroke, osteoporosis, arthritis (rheumatoid and osteoarthritis), and diabetes. While there have been some contradictory results, there does seem to be **clear evidence that Tai Chi is effective to prevent falls, improve psychological wellbeing, and overall health status** (Lee & Ernst, 2012).

**In the U.S., people often practice Tai Chi for its benefits as a low-impact, aerobic exercise. It enhances physical condition and strengthens muscles while aiding in development of coordination and flexibility.** Additionally, Tai Chi has been shown helpful in improving balance and easing pain and stiffness. There are also many reports linking the practice of Tai Chi to improvements in sleep and overall wellbeing.

While studies continue, there is evidence that cancer patients experience benefits that include:

- Improved quality of life
- Reduced fatigue
- Decreased risk of falls
- Improved muscle strength
- Flexibility
- Balance
- Improved function
- Improved alertness and attentiveness
- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Improved sleep
- Maintenance of bone density, post-menopausal
- Improved mood

Although there is less convincing evidence, Tai Chi may also:

- Lower blood pressure and improve cardiovascular function
- Improve immune function
- Reduce pain associated with neuropathy
- Improve memory

## Is tai chi right for me?

**Tai Chi typically involves gentle, unforced movements, and many Tai Chi instructors can modify the movements to accommodate an individual’s activity restrictions.**

**Tai Chi classes or sessions can range anywhere from \$2.00 per session at a community center to \$40-\$60 for a set of classes over a 6-week period of time.**

## How do I choose a Tai Chi instructor/class?

**Tai Chi is not regulated by federal or state governments and instructors do not have to be licensed.** Instead, students train under a master instructor and obtain approval to teach it themselves after several years of practice and study. **It is best to ask about the instructor’s training and experience prior to starting their program.**