

INFORMATION

information



VICTORIA

inc. OSTEOPOROSIS VICTORIA

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY - THE BENEFITS OF TAI CHI FOR ARTHRITIS

Tai chi is an ancient Chinese martial art that is practised throughout the world as an effective exercise for health. Tai chi consists of fluid, gentle movements that are relaxed and slow in tempo. Also the fact that chi can be practiced almost anywhere makes it a most suitable form of exercise for just about anyone.

Health and exercise experts agree that an exercise program for people with arthritis should incorporate exercises that improve muscular strength, flexibility, and aerobic fitness. Tai chi is a form of exercise that can improve all of these fitness components, as well as having additional health benefits. Tai chi is extremely effective in improving balance and posture, and mind-body health.

- Muscle strength is important for supporting and protecting joints, which will assist in decreasing pain and deformity. Muscle strength is also important for improving balance and the ability to perform every day tasks (eg, getting out of a chair).
- Flexibility exercises help to reduce pain and stiffness associated with musculoskeletal conditions. They also help minimise joint deformity, and improve joint range of motion, which makes movement easier, and more efficient.
- Aerobic fitness is important for overall health and fitness of your heart, lungs, and muscles. Good aerobic fitness will allow for more efficient and easier performance of every day tasks such as climbing stairs or walking to the shops.
- Tai chi movements emphasise the importance of weight transference, which is an essential

component of good balance. Having good balance is important for falls prevention. Tai chi also emphasises correct posture, which also has benefits for falls prevention, as well as decreased pain and stiffness of joints and muscles.

- Your mind and body are intricately linked, and the actions of one will impact on the other. Tai chi enhances both mental and physical relaxation, which is important in decreasing pain and stiffness, as well as assisting in healing the body. Tai chi also enhances clarity of the mind and improves mood, which also has positive benefits for your body (eg, a negative mood and pain have been shown to be related).
- Tai chi facilitates the flow of "qi" through your body. Qi is the life energy that circulates throughout the body, performing many functions to maintain good health. Practicing tai chi helps to strengthen your qi, therefore improving your health.

For more information

Arthritis Victoria trains leaders in Tai Chi for Arthritis. Doctor Paul Lam developed this style of tai chi specifically for people with arthritis. Arthritis Victoria has a register of metropolitan and rural tai chi for arthritis classes. To locate your nearest class contact Arthritis Victoria on 8531 8000. The Tai Chi for Arthritis instructional video can also be purchased from Arthritis Victoria, or borrowed from the Resource Centre.

ARTHRITIS VICTORIA

If you would like further information please contact our telephone information service on (03) 8531 8000 or 1800 011 041 (country callers)

This material is for your information and is not intended to be medical advice. You are encouraged to review the information provided with your doctor or relevant health professional.

November 2002