

The benefits of Tai Chi and how it can improve your life



As we age, our bodies slow down and don't heal as quickly -- Tai Chi can help fight the negative effects of aging.

by [David Haddon](#)

March 12, 2018

Life is temporary, yet we are living longer than our ancestors. In 1950, the average lifespan for men and women was 65 for men, and 71 for women. Today we are living well into our 80's and even 90's. Science and technology have helped increase our life expectancy, but what about the Quality Of Life? Sure, we are [living longer](#), but what's the point if your quality of life is poor? Can science and technology fix that? With rising numbers of opioid addicts and reliance on anti-depressants and other drugs, most people today are looking to our past to help survive our future. The ancient Chinese martial arts practice of Tai Chi is a low-impact form of exercise that will help improve your quality of life, both physically and [mentally](#).

The history

Tai Chi's (t'ai chi ch'üan,太极拳) exact origins are unknown and most theories are from legend. Taoist monk Zang Sanfeng is credited with starting the ancient practice, which is a form of martial arts, used for defense as well as health benefits, in the 12th century. He either dreamt about or witnessed a fight between a snake and a crane in the Wu-dang Mountains.

Chen Wangting invented the modern-day form of Tai Chi after a lifetime as a warrior and a scholar in the Ming Dynasty. In his retirement, Chen created a new form of martial arts based on the Chen family style and combined it with the study of Yi Jing, Chinese medicine, theories of yin-yang, the five elements, the study and theory of Jingluo, and methods of Daoyin and Tuna.

Over the hundreds of years since its creation, modern Tai Chi is far from its origins, but the Chen family style is the closest to its original form.

The benefits

Tai Chi is also known as Meditation in Motion. This low-impact exercise can help calm your spirit while your body gently moves through each pose.

When done correctly, Tai Chi can help with balance, mental clarity, an increase in your energy levels, relief of joint pain by decreasing inflammation, and improve your sleep. Researchers at Harvard Medical School, in working with chronic heart failure patients, have found that those who practice Tai Chi regularly see an improvement in their lifestyle.

This meditation in motion helps keep the body active, whereas those who do not practice Tai Chi are less active and the aches and pains increase.

The New England Journal of Medicine has also found that Tai Chi is very beneficial to Parkinson's patients. Those who practice regularly have a substantially improved gait and posture, which leads to fewer falls. Fibromyalgia patients will find relief from joint pain as well. The smooth motions keep the joints moving without any heavy impact.

In an age of opioid crisis and increasingly poor nutrition, more and more people are turning away from modern medication and going with a more natural approach. While Tai Chi and other forms of meditation and exercise can greatly improve your quality of life, it is not a cure-all for everything.

Check with your doctor before starting any new exercise program and do your own research. There are plenty of gyms or martial arts centers that will offer classes on Tai Chi. I recommend finding a program and taking a few classes to make sure you are getting the most out of this beneficial exercise for both mind and body.