

Tai Chi for Arthritis

What is it?

- The Tai Chi for Arthritis program was developed by Dr. Paul Lam to relieve pain for people with arthritis and improve their quality of life. The program is also available as Tai Chi for Arthritis for Falls Prevention, an identical program with a greater emphasis on falls prevention.
- Tai Chi for Arthritis uses the Sun style method of Tai Chi, incorporating slow and gentle movement exercises to improve muscular strength, flexibility, and fitness. The movements are taught to both left and right sides and with turns to move forward and backward to improve mobility and offer a variety of combinations. It integrates mind and body, with a focus on awareness of weight transfer, breathing techniques and mood improvement.
- Tai Chi for Arthritis teaches participants basic Tai Chi for Arthritis movements in eight to 12 45-minute to one-hour lessons, with regular practice between lessons. The program is available via an instructor-led community-based group or in a self-directed format.
 - **Instructor-Led Community-Based Group format:** Participants meet in-person 12 to 16 times, led by a certified instructor. It can also be taught in two, eight-session segments.
 - **Self-Directed:** Participants complete the program on their own completing the 12 lessons on the Tai Chi for Arthritis instructional DVD or via [online lessons](#) led by Dr. Lam.
- Tai Chi for Arthritis is accessible and enjoyable. It does not require special equipment or clothing and does not require much space. It can be modified for seated or standing, and accommodates all levels of ability.
- Participants are encouraged to learn from their instructors and other resources, including books and articles on Tai Chi. They can interact with instructors and students on the Tai Chi for Health Institute's online discussion forum. Ongoing trainings to develop depth are available both virtually and in-person.
- Tai Chi for Arthritis instructors must complete a virtual or in-person workshop and be certified by the Tai Chi for Health Institute. Ability to deliver the program safely and effectively is emphasized. Instructors must meet basic standards demonstrated by their performance of tai chi forms and a written test. Instructors must renew their certification every two years.

Who is it for?

Intended for people with or at risk for arthritis but is open to anyone.

What are the benefits?

- Reduces falls, pain, and fear of falling.
- Improve posture, mobility, and cognition.
- Increases range of motion.
- Relieves pain for people with arthritis and improves their quality of life.
- Greater sense of well-being.

For more information

Tai Chi for Health Institute

<https://taichiforhealthinstitute.org/how-does-tai-chi-for-arthritis-work/>

The Arthritis Foundation

<https://www.arthritis.org/health-wellness/healthy-living/physical-activity/yoga/tai-chi-for-arthritis>

Select References

Aboushanab T, Basalom S, Qoqandi M. Tai Chi Mentions and Recommendations in Clinical Practice Guidelines: A Global Review. *Integrative Medicine Reports*. 2022 May 1;1(1):29-37.

Callahan LF, Cleveland RJ, Altpeter M, Hackney B. Evaluation of tai chi program effectiveness for people with arthritis in the community: a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*. 2016 Jan 1;24(1):101-10.

Fransen M, Nairn L, Winstanley J, Lam P, Edmonds J. Physical activity for osteoarthritis management: a randomized controlled clinical trial evaluating hydrotherapy or Tai Chi classes. *Arthritis Rheum*. 2007 Apr 15;57(3):407-14. doi: 10.1002/art.22621. PMID: 17443749.

Song, Lee E, Lam P, Bae S. Effects of Tai Chi exercise on pain, balance, muscle strength, and physical functioning in older women with osteoarthritis: A randomized clinical trial. *Journal of Rheumatology*. Sept 2003. 30:9 page 2039-2044.

Summary of the evidence

Author, Year	Design	Participants	Outcomes
Aboushanab T, Basalom S, Qoqandi M (2022)	Systematic review of clinical practice guidelines mentioning or recommending tai chi	50 studies met the review inclusion criteria	Tai chi was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended or mentioned mostly in clinical guidelines for chronic pain, osteoarthritis, and cancer management • Strongly recommended for osteoarthritis of the hand, hip, and knee • Recommended in 4/5 (80%) of osteoarthritis guidelines
Callahan LF, Cleveland R., Altpeter M, & Hackney B (2016).	A parallel arm pragmatic randomized controlled trial that determines the effects of an intervention under usual conditions in which it will be applied, as contrasted with an efficacy trial implemented under controlled conditions	Of the 343 participants, 284 completed pretest and posttest data (intervention group n=151 and control group n=133) The majority of participants were 50 years or older (92%), Caucasian (87%), and reported having more than a high school degree (80%)	Participants experienced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↑ reach while maintaining balance ↑ sense of well-being ↓ pain, stiffness, and fatigue symptoms and sustained these improvements one year later

<p>Fransen M, Nairn L, Winstanley J, Lam P, Edmonds J (2007)</p>	<p>Randomized controlled trial</p> <p>Outcomes assessed 12 and 24 weeks after randomization and included pain and physical function, general health status, psychological well-being, and physical performance</p>	<p>152 older persons with chronic symptomatic hip or knee OA. Participants were randomly allocated for 12 weeks to hydrotherapy classes (n = 55), tai chi classes (n = 56), or a waiting list control group (n = 41)</p>	<p>Participants in the tai chi intervention group demonstrated:</p> <p>↑ physical functioning ↑ general health status ↓ pain</p>
<p>Song LE, Lam P, Bae S (2003).</p>	<p>Quasi-experimental pretest-posttest Performance, body mass index, cardiovascular functioning, and self-reported outcomes at baseline and 12 weeks</p>	<p>72 older women with osteoarthritis; due to dropout rates, 43 completed both the pretest and posttest measures (experimental group n=22 and control group n=21)</p>	<p>Among those participating in Tai Chi for Arthritis:</p> <p>↑ balance and functioning ↓ arthritis symptoms ↓ pain and stiffness in joints compared to the control group</p>