

mind body

I had heard about the Tai Chi classes at Simple Cures from a few of Local's readers and was happy to hear from Ryan who works at Simple Cures, and even happier to hear that he wanted to write to tell our readers more about Tai Chi. Think I'll have to try a class or two.

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TAI CHI—CULTIVATING HOLISTIC FITNESS

As the cultural doors of the East have opened, fascinating and valuable exercise alternatives have been made accessible. Tai Chi, one of the main pillars of Traditional Chinese Medicine (along with Acupuncture, Tuina massage, Herbs and Nutrition), is one of these and is an ideal approach to enhancing fitness levels.

When we think of ways to improve our fitness, most of us look to cardiovascular exercise or resistance training as the gold standards. However there is a form of exercise that combines the best aspects of them both. Tai chi is a balanced system of exercise that addresses all areas of physical fitness - muscular strength and endurance, flexibility or core stability - as well as relaxation and mental fitness.

Tai Chi emphasizes graceful movements and breathing which improve the flow of Qi, the body's vital life energy, which promotes self-healing. Not only does this Tai Chi use energy and exercise and give us a new approach to promote fitness, but it is also an ideal healing tool to manage several conditions. Those with high blood pressure, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, mood disorders, and any illness that has joint and muscle pain as a symptom, can greatly benefit from Tai Chi's healing power. Even the most serious cases can be treated and improved with Tai Chi.

Tai chi is also perfect for calming an agitated and over-worked mind; a great remedy for the stresses of modern living. As practiced in the West today, Tai Chi can be thought of as a moving form of meditation and an excellent stress management tool. Regular practice can even reduce levels of cortisol, which is the body's stress hormone.

Tai Chi can be practiced by people of all ages in most physical conditions. Although Tai Chi is less strenuous and slower moving, this does not mean those who practice it do not get physical health benefits. Tai chi is an ideal exercise for the elderly, disabled and injured individuals because the movements are low-impact and allow weak and/or injured bodies to slowly rebuild strength, develop and retain lean tissue, improve posture, reduce pain, and improve co-ordination and flexibility.

Think because you are already younger and active that Tai chi won't

help? Consider that this exercise trains you to relax your external muscles and focuses on centering your movements, utilizing deeper postural muscles, which strengthens the tendons and bones of your spine, core and hip complex; physical improvements anybody can benefit from. This is in contrast to resistance training, for example, which focuses on developing strength of the external muscles which can predispose us to muscular imbalances and spinal mis-alignment. By incorporating this simple exercise you can promote optimal balance to your training regimen.

Physical activity, however defined, is all about movement. Our bodies are designed to be functional, using full movements of our leg and arm muscles. Using all body parts harmoniously helps to facilitate the circulation of blood and Qi to all of our tissues and internal organs. Tai Chi is valuable because it integrates aspects of mind, body and spirit to cultivate holistic fitness. The benefits of Tai Chi, like any other form of exercise, are cumulative. If practiced correctly and sufficiently on a regular basis, Tai Chi is the perfect self-management tool and can be used to restore and optimize your health and wellness. It is recommended that you learn from a certified instructor however, to ensure you learn proper form and technique. Simple Cures Chinese Medicine Wellness is a multi-disciplinary wellness centre with a focus on traditional and natural medicine. Simple Cures offers the community a series of Tai Chi classes.

