

Tai Chi

What is Tai Chi?

It has been proposed that Tai Chi originates from the 13th Century. It is also claimed that the monk Chang San-feng started to develop the form after witnessing a fight between a crane and a snake: the graceful moves of the snake versus that aggressive attack from the crane.

Tai Chi comprises a series of postures linked by slow, graceful movements and accompanied by breathing techniques that focus the concentration. It is performed in a sequence and it is claimed that it can help to restore and enhance the flow of “chi”, or 'vital energy'. It is also described as exercising the mind, body and spirit to help improve health and well-being.

What are the health benefits of Tai Chi?

Tai Chi is being used more frequently within the health care sector as a form of alternative exercise and relaxation. It is claimed that it can help with:

- Reduction in stress and tension
- Improving flexibility and mobility
- Creating a sense of well being and calm
- Improving balance
- Improving posture
- Improving body awareness

An added advantage is that is adapted to be practised when standing up, or sitting or lying down.

Many practitioners of Eastern-based health practices prescribe Tai Chi as a form of rehabilitation and treatments for health conditions, in combination with Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Which Tai Chi form do I try?

There are five main styles of Tai Chi- Yang, Sun, Chen, Wu and Wu (Hao), and from these there are now many modern day forms that have branched off from the 5 main styles. Each style will have a different emphasis on: intensity of effort; speed of movement; and grace. Some may include jumping, tumbling or the use of weapons or sticks some teachers may incorporate several styles into one practise.

Which form is best?

All of the forms have their own benefits, the decision is completely yours.

For more of an understanding of Tai Chi and how it is performed please visit;

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/taichi

www.sdhct.nhs.uk/aboutus/services/painservice/improvinghealthandfitness/4_taichi

Tai Chi in the community?

Community Tai Chi classes can be hard to find as they tend not to be so well publicised as other alternative forms of movement. You may be expected to book block sessions as it is valuable to learn the routine from the start and learn the whole form. This is something that your instructor will be able to talk to you about. If you have any concerns about joining a group many instructors would encourage you to discuss this with them before attending. Although there are several benefits in joining a community instructor lead class, Tai Chi can also be practised at home using DVD's, interactive computer consoles or illustrated books.

For more information on finding a local Tai Chi classes;

- www.devontaichi.co.uk
- www.taichination.co.uk
- www.easytaichi.co.uk
- www.taichifinder.co.uk
- www.taichidevon.co.uk
- www.naturaltaichidevon.co.uk