

# Tai Chi: Meditation in Motion

by *Maria Tan, BScOT, MSc.*

Tai Chi is a Chinese martial art that combines concentration, breathing, and patterns of smooth movements of the whole body. Some people describe it as moving meditation.

There are many styles of Tai Chi, but they all share certain basic moves. Within each style you can learn different patterns of moves, called forms. These forms can take as little as 5 minutes and as long as 30 minutes to perform. This is because some have less than 10 moves, while others have hundreds of moves. Some forms are adapted for people with certain health conditions.

Tai Chi may help to improve:

- balance and strength
- sleep
- stress and mood
- breathing
- blood pressure
- chronic pain
- energy levels.

Practicing Tai Chi is a way to relax and keep your mind and body active at the same time. You don't need special clothes or equipment, and you can practice indoors or outside – you just need a flat area about 15 feet (5 metres) long.

## Check out a Tai Chi class in your community!

Here are a few tips:

- Watch a class and talk to the instructor before signing up.
- Try a few different styles of Tai Chi to see which one you prefer.



- Wear comfortable, loose clothing, and runners with non-slip soles that aren't too 'grippy'.
- Tell your instructor about any health issues you have.
- If a move hurts, stop doing it. Ask your instructor how to change the way you do that move.

## Learn more:

*Tai chi: Discover the many possible health benefits* (Mayo Clinic, 2009)

About the Author:

Maria Tan worked as an occupational therapist in geriatric rehabilitation for eight years, then as a content specialist in active living, for a national, bilingual, health promotion network. She has been a tai chi practitioner for many years, and completed a master's thesis on the topic of Tai Chi and healthy aging. Ms Tan is currently pursuing a degree in Library and Information Studies, with a focus on health librarianship.