

# TAI CHI & QI GONG WITH LILY MO

at CHR Health Centre  
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Lily had suffered from severe arthritis in the shoulders and knees and now is fully flexible after two years of training in China to become a Tai Chi & Qi Gong instructor.

## NO PAIN BIG GAINS

Although Tai Chi is slow and gentle and doesn't leave you breathless, it addresses the key components of fitness – build muscle strength and core, increase flexibility and balance, and some aerobic conditioning.

## THE BENEFITS OF TAI CHI

*This gentle form of exercise can prevent or ease many ills of aging and could be the perfect activity for the rest of your life.*

Tai chi is often described as "meditation in motion," but it might well be called "*medication* in motion." There is growing evidence that this mind-body practice, which originated in China as a martial art, has value in treating or preventing many health problems. And you can get started even if you aren't in top shape or the best of health. In this low-impact, slow-motion exercise, you go without pausing through a series of motions named for animal actions — for example, "white crane spreads its wings" — or martial arts moves, such as "box both ears." As you move, you breathe deeply and naturally, focusing your attention — as in some kinds of meditation — on your bodily sensations. Tai chi differs from other types of exercise in several respects. The movements are usually circular and never forced, the muscles are relaxed rather than tensed, the joints are not fully extended or bent, and connective tissues are not stretched. Tai chi can be easily adapted for anyone, from the most fit to people confined to wheelchairs or recovering from surgery.

Source: *The Harvard Health Publications – The Benefits of Tai-Chi*

### Our one-hour Tai chi class includes:

**Warm-up.** Gentle motions help you to loosen your muscles and joints and focus on your breath & body.

**Qigong.** Gentle breathing combined with movement helps to relax the mind and mobilize the body's energy, preparing for Tai Chi.

**Instruction and practice of tai chi forms.** Short forms including sets of 8 to 12 movements for beginners, elderly people and people recovering from illnesses or injuries; long forms may include hundreds for the advanced students.

### Evidence of the Benefits of Tai Chi:

**Muscle strength.** In a 2006 study published in *Alternative - Therapies in Health and Medicine*, Stanford University researchers reported benefits of tai chi in 39 women and men, average age 66, with below-average fitness and at least one cardiovascular risk factor. After taking 36 tai chi classes in 12 weeks, they showed improvement in both lower-body strength (measured by the number of times they could rise from a chair in 30 seconds) and upper-body strength (measured by their ability to do arm curls).

- In a Japanese study using the same strength measures, 113 older adults were assigned to different 12-week exercise programs, including tai chi, brisk walking, and resistance training. People who did tai chi improved more than 30% in lower-body strength and 25% in arm strength — almost as much as those who participated in resistance training, and more than those assigned to brisk walking.

- "Although you aren't working with weights or resistance bands, the unsupported arm exercise involved in tai chi strengthens your upper body," says internist Dr. Gloria Yeh, an assistant professor at Harvard Medical School. Tai chi strengthens both the lower & upper extremities and also the core muscles of the back and abdomen."

**Flexibility.** Women in the 2006 Stanford study significantly boosted upper- and lower-body flexibility as well as strength.

**Balance.** Tai chi improves balance and, according to some studies, reduces falls. Proprioception — the ability to sense the position of one's body in space — declines with age. Tai chi helps train this sense, which is a function of sensory neurons in the inner ear and stretch receptors in the muscles and ligaments. Tai chi also improves muscle strength and flexibility, which makes it easier to recover from a stumble. Fear of falling can make you more likely to fall; studies have found that tai chi training helps reduce that fear.

**Aerobic conditioning.** Depending on the speed and size of the movements, tai chi can provide some aerobic benefits. But in the Japanese study, only participants assigned to brisk walking gained much aerobic fitness. If your clinician advises a more intense cardio workout with a higher heart rate than tai chi can offer, you may need something more aerobic as well.

## CLASS SCHEDULE:

Mondays – Hourly from 12 pm to 6 pm  
Thursdays – To be opened in the future

Cost: \$20 per session / \$200 for 11 sessions

Limit: 8 people per class