

[Home](#) > [Specialties](#) > [Dermatology](#) > [General Medicine](#)

## Tai Chi -- an Innovative Approach to Reduce Falling in the Elderly

The National Institute on Aging has funded a novel program to reduce frailty and falls in the elderly. Two recent studies from this program demonstrate that the ancient oriental martial arts form Tai Chi can maintain strength and balance and reduce falling in the elderly. Tai Chi consists of slow, graceful, precise body movements, and it is used in this country as an exercise to enhance balance and body awareness.

In the first study, researchers randomly assigned 200 seniors over age 70 living in the community to 15 weeks of Tai Chi training, balance training on a computerized balance system, or an educational control group. Tai Chi significantly reduced the rate of falling by 47.5%, after adjustment for fall risk factors. The Tai Chi group also had the greatest reduction in systolic blood pressure after a 12-minute walk and, when compared with the control group, a significant reduction in the fear of falling.

The second study used Tai Chi to complement balance and/or strength training. One hundred ten subjects (average age, 80) were randomly assigned to one of four interventions for three months: balance training three times weekly, resistance strength training three times weekly, combination balance and strength training, or an educational control program. All groups participated in weekly Tai Chi classes for six months after the intervention. Tai Chi maintained the significant gains in strength and balance achieved in the three intervention groups, although some decrement was noted after six months.

**Comment:** It is encouraging to see that a simple, low-technology intervention such as Tai Chi can significantly influence factors that reduce the risk of falling among the elderly.

— *JC Puffer*

*Published in Journal Watch Dermatology July 1, 1996*

*Originally published in Journal Watch June 14, 1996*

Gut Check

HIV and ID Observations

Cardiology

**Dermatology**

Emergency Medicine

Gastroenterology

General Medicine

HIV/AIDS



### Article Tools

[Print this article](#)

[E-mail this article to a friend](#)

### Share

[Digg this](#)

[Add to del.icio.us](#)

[Add to reddit](#)

### E-mail Alerts

Delivered to your inbox.  
Tailored to your interests. Free.

[Sign Up Now!](#)

### Journal Watch Newsletters

Available in 13 specialties with convenient  
delivery and 10 free online CME exams.

[Subscribe Now!](#)