



Essential Tremor (ET)

Coping with ET: Tai chi

Tai chi (pronounced “tie chee”) originated in China during the 12th century AD as a martial art, but today is a mind-body practice in the West. Also known as “moving meditation,” tai chi combines slow and gentle movements with deep breathing and meditation.

Tai chi was developed as a set of exercises that combined imitation of the movements of animals for strength with flexibility and suppleness. While the entire body is relaxed and in an upright position, each exercise is performed at a slow, uniform speed and easily flows into the next exercise. The entire body is in motion at the same time during exercise.

Besides movement, tai chi also incorporates deep, relaxed breathing and concentration, or meditation. Practitioners believe that tai chi:

- Promotes well-being, calmness and awareness;
- Improves balance, muscle strength, coordination and flexibility;
- Aids digestion;
- Benefits bone health because it is a weight-bearing exercise;
- Eases pain and stiffness;
- Improves sleep;
- Modifies easily for the older and disabled people.

A National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded study, reported in the Feb. 9, 2012, issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, evaluated three different forms of exercise—resistance training, stretching, and tai chi—and found that tai chi led to the greatest overall improvements in balance and stability for patients with mild to moderate Parkinson’s disease. And the NIH’s National Center for Complementary & Alternative Medicine is currently sponsoring studies with the goal of determining how the body is affected by tai chi and its influence on health.

Tai chi is practiced within a group of people or individually. It is recommended when learning tai chi that a teacher be consulted so that proper technique is instilled. Many community centers and schools offer courses in tai chi, and teachers can be found in your community by consulting a yellow pages or other directory.

As with any exercise, always consult your physician before beginning the practice of tai chi.



Our Mission:

The IETF funds research to find the cause of essential tremor (ET) that leads to treatments and a cure, increases awareness, and provides educational materials, tools, and support for healthcare providers, the public, and those affected by ET.