

Tai Chi may aid in arthritis treatment

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CNN Headline News

(CNN) -- When it comes to working out, no exercise regimen is "one size fits all," but one particular martial art form comes pretty close. According to a review article in the Archives of Internal Medicine, the ancient martial art of Tai Chi not only improves strength, balance and flexibility in older people, but it also has positive effects on chronic health conditions like multiple sclerosis and joint problems.

In fact, the Arthritis Foundation has looked to Tai Chi as treatment for arthritis. The Arthritis Foundation's program is based on Dr. Paul Lam's "Tai Chi for Arthritis" program.

Lam, who is now 53, developed osteoarthritis in his 20s and used Tai Chi as a way to control the disease.

While there are no published studies proving whether Tai Chi can reduce pain and inflammation associated with arthritis, participants report benefits ranging from pain relief to lower blood pressure.

But even though Tai Chi appears to have numerous benefits to participants, it is still too early for physicians to begin prescribing Tai Chi as a remedy for chronic health problems because many of the past studies had design flaws, according to Dr. Chenchen Wang, the author of this most recent report.

Wang urges patients with chronic health problems take precautions before beginning a Tai Chi practice, because for some people Tai Chi could worsen joint problems and other symptoms of arthritis. So as the saying goes, be sure to check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.

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