

Popular Chinese fitness routine gaining popularity in the U.S.

By Meghan Streit
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Staying in shape doesn't have to mean being chained to the treadmill or elliptical machine.

Today most gyms offer a dizzying variety of fitness classes designed to suit every preference and ability level—from aqua aerobics to yoga.

Ancient Chinese fitness perfect for all ages

One increasingly popular class popping up at fitness centers around the country is tai chi (pronounced ti-chee). Originally a form of ancient Chinese self-defense, tai chi is a slow and gentle series of smooth movements designed to improve balance and flexibility and reduce stress. Because it is easy on muscles



Photo courtesy of www.tropicalisland.de/

People of all ages regularly practice tai chi in China.

and joints, tai chi is an ideal addition to older adults' fitness routines.

"Tai chi is slow which makes it easy to catch up," says Angie Yung, who teaches a tai chi class at Monarch Landing. "It's great for people of any age who have never really exercised."

Like yoga, tai chi incorporates
see TAI CHI page 3



Photo by Meghan Streit

Henny Coppoolse (right), who lives at Monarch Landing, takes part in a tai chi class held on-site.

from TAI CHI page 1
meditative relaxation, which combined with controlled physical movement, delivers a host of health benefits. According to the Mayo Clinic, preliminary research shows older adults who practice tai chi experience relief from depression, anxiety, and chronic pain; lower blood pressure; a slowing of bone loss; and improved balance and coordination which reduces the risk of falling.

Good for physical and mental health

Monarch Landing community member Annie Hake was first exposed to tai chi on television. She didn't think she'd enjoy it, but she decided to enroll in the on-site class offered

through the College of DuPage continuing education program.

"We're making progress—it's amazing," Hake says. "It's exercise, but it's also relaxing at the same time."

Tai chi is catching on at Monarch Landing. About 20 residents and members of the local community are attending the eight-week course which costs only about \$20. Yung, who has been teaching tai chi for ten years, keeps the classes fun and upbeat. She's happy to pause to help someone figure out a movement, and takes the time to answer questions.

"I want people to be smiling and looking forward to class—that's my goal," Yung says.

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