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Tai chi may help fight fibromyalgia: study

Tai chi — the Chinese practice of exercise and meditation — could relieve symptoms of a painful chronic condition called fibromyalgia, a new study finds.

Tai chi involves gentle, flowing movements in which students shift their weight and breathe deeply, cycling through a series of stances with poetic names, such as “white crane spreads its wings.” The philosophy of tai chi involves moving a person’s vital energy, or qi — pronounced “chee” — through the body.

In the study, doctors randomly assigned 66 fibromyalgia patients to take either a 12-week tai chi class or attend

a “wellness education” class that included stretching exercises, according to a study in Thursday’s *New England Journal of Medicine*. Fibromyalgia patients experience pain, stiffness, fatigue and other problems.

All participants attended two hourlong classes a week and had instructions to practice at home 20 minutes a day. Most were women with an average age of 50, and most were overweight.

After finishing the course, 79 percent of tai chi participants said their symptoms had improved, compared with 39 percent of those in the educational class.

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