

# Tai Chi And Its Many Health Benefits

**T**ai Chi is one of China's cultural treasures. The art has been passed down from generation to generation. It is well known for its ability in the maintenance of health and prevention of illness. In China, it is used as a form of recuperative therapy in most major hospitals.

## **Nervous System**

The Yang Style of Tai Chi requires you to use your mind in a relaxed yet focused manner. The mind should lead the movements for a minimum of one round which is approximately twenty minutes. Because of the subtle nature of the movements and the way they are strung together, practising the form requires a high degree of concentration and relaxation. As a result, your balance, coordination and fine motor control are improved. With the mind fully involved in leading the body, you eventually enter into a state of absorption. As the mind develops more power, your concentration improves and you begin to gain more control over your nervous system, which in turn helps you to stay calm and maintain mental and physical balance. With regular practice, this process of strengthening the nervous system goes on indefinitely. Hence Tai Chi is especially beneficial to those whose concentration span is short; who are working under constant pressure; or are suffering from insomnia.

## **Respiratory System**

By practising Tai Chi regularly, you begin to breathe diaphragmatically, which enables

the chi to sink to the Dan Tian. Gradually your breathing becomes deeper, longer, finer, smoother, and even. This helps to increase your lung capacity, and strengthens your diaphragm. Using the diaphragm reduces the pressure in the chest cavity which allows your lungs greater freedom of movement. This process improves oxygenation of the blood and the elasticity of the lung tissues. For this reason, Tai Chi is regarded as being beneficial for the respiratory system.

## **Cardio-vascular System**

A requirement of your practice is for the whole body to be relaxed and to avoid using brute force. Your movements should be light, agile and alive. As a result of moving in a slow and relaxed manner, the functioning of the lymphatic system and the circulation of blood and chi are improved. A more efficient circulatory system reduces the workload of the heart. While practising Tai Chi, you can be perspiring, but your breathing will be deep and slow, and your pulse rate will not increase. It is now common for doctors to recommend Tai Chi to their patients who suffer from heart conditions and blood pressure problems because the movements are continuous and gentle, and do not strain the heart.

## **Muscles, Joints and Tendons**

Tai Chi requires your joints to be relaxed and rounded, and your movements to describe circles and parabolas. All the muscles and joints of the body are

involved in performing the movements. As the muscles relax, it becomes easier to exercise the ligaments, tendons and joints, which over a period of time become stronger and more flexible. By comparison, it is easier to strengthen the muscles than the ligaments, tendons and joints. One reason for this is the lack of blood circulation to these areas due to the density of their construction. The constant gentle and rounded movements help to exercise these difficult-to-get-at areas. It is well known that regular exercise helps to strengthen the skeletal system. A major requirement for Tai Chi practice is good posture. Learning how to hold your spine straight yet relaxed will help to reduce stress on the joints, spine and internal organs. In Tai Chi, the combination of good posture, strong legs, and the constant rotation of the lumbar spine helps to prevent and alleviate lower back problems and reduce the effects of the natural degeneration of the spine and joints which occurs with age.

The constant contraction and expansion of the muscles help to improve their elasticity reducing the likelihood of them being damaged. On the other hand, muscles that are tense and inflexible are more susceptible to injuries. In the authentic Yang Style Tai Chi, you turn on your solid leg without rocking your weight back first. This thoroughly trains your leg muscles. With regular practice over a period of time, you improve your strength, balance, agility and flexibility.