

TAI CHI FOR DIABETES FACT SHEET FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

Your patient would like to enroll in the Tai Chi for Diabetes class. This is some information about tai chi in general, what is special about this particular type of tai chi and how your patient will benefit from participating in the class.

What is Tai Chi?

- Tai chi is a slow moving meditative exercise that began in ancient China, around 500 years ago.
- Tai chi combines stress reduction with movement to improve health.
- Dr. Paul Lam, a Sydney Australia family practice doctor developed Tai Chi for Diabetes especially for people with diabetes and those at risk for developing diabetes. He developed the form with the assistance of diabetes specialists and physical therapists.

What are the benefits of Tai Chi for Diabetes?

- Improves blood sugar control.
- Increases strength.
- Increases flexibility
- Decreases pain (if joint pain is an issue)
- Decreases stress
- Helps reduce high blood pressure
- Increased sense of well-being.

What is some of the research behind Tai Chi for Diabetes?

- In the British Journal of Sports Medicine, 2001 June 35(3): 148-56, Dr. J.X. Li, et al reported on "Tai chi: physiological characteristics and beneficial effects on health" that tai chi rated as a moderately aerobic exercise.
- In the New England Journal of Medicine, 2001 May 3, J. Tuomilehot et al reported that five hundred and twenty-two middle aged, over-weight subjects with impaired glucose tolerance were randomly assigned to the lifestyle intervention group and the control group. Each subject in the intervention group received individualized counselling aimed at reducing weight and total intake of food, and increasing intake of fiber and physical activities. All the glucose tolerance tests were performed annually. The main duration of follow-up was 3.2 years. The control group had annual visits to doctors and was given diet advice and asked to reduce weight; they were given general diabetic education. The intervention group was found to have the risk of developing diabetes reduced by 58% compared to the control group, even though weight loss was small (about 5% of total body weight) and exercise was gentle.
- In the New England Journal of Medicine 2002, Feb. 7, lifestyle intervention was found to be even more beneficial than Metformin in preventing the development of diabetes in glucose impaired subjects. Metformin reduced the development of diabetes by 31% when compared with controls while lifestyle intervention alone reduced the development by 58% when compared with controls.

- **Where do people practice Tai Chi for Diabetes?**
- Tai Chi for Diabetes has been officially adopted as a preferred form of exercise by the Australian Diabetic Association.
- People in cities throughout the U.S. practice Tai Chi for Diabetes. For example in New Mexico, 37 instructors have been trained to teach Tai Chi for Diabetes in 20 pueblos.

How can you encourage your patient to benefit from Tai Chi for Diabetes?

- *Continue to give them positive feedback for attending class and practice tai chi.*
- *Complete the Participant Enrollment Form for your patient.*
- *Remind them of hypoglycemic precautions. Encourage them to stay within their comfort zones when they do tai chi.*
- *Ask them about their tai chi practice when they come in for regular visits.*
- *Monitor the effect of tai chi on the control of their blood sugar.*