



Create Better Health Tai Chi Series Guide

For instructors

- Series Length: 16 classes- 8 weeks recommended, two classes per week
- Classes should be ~45 minutes
- Class Preparation:
 - Provide an open space allowing 6-10 feet between participants
 - Have a chair available for participants
 - Music- stream music from iPad or phone, through a Bluetooth speaker from a music app (yoga or Tai Chi music playlist are good choices) or use a CD.
 - Arrive early to welcome guest and set up chairs
- Ensure that participants sign the waiver during their first class and take roll at each class.
- Participants should complete the evaluation at the end of the class series

Class Objectives

- Identify Health and Human Services physical activity guideline recommendations for Americans
- Explain benefits associated with active living
- Successfully demonstrate the Tai Chi Stage 1 warm up, cool down and movement sequence taught in classes.

Introduction: Welcome to the Create Better Health Tai Chi class.

(Intro should take about 5-10 minutes in the first class)

“My name is _____. I am a certified Tai Chi instructor and ambassador with Create Better Health.” (If you are working with a partner, be sure to introduce them to the class)

- Create Better Health is Utah’s SNAP-Ed Program. SNAP-Ed is the education component of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP .
- This program is offered through Utah State University Extension offices.
- Create Better Health teaches people how to eat well and be active with limited time and money.
- All the physical activity information in Create Better Health classes is based on Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans developed by the US Health and Human services. These evidence-based guidelines recommend that all adults move more and sit less throughout the day, recognizing that any physical activity is better than none.
- In addition to teaching Tai Chi, we also teach classes in the community and online to help people learn how to make healthy food choices. These classes teach how to plan meals, shop for groceries, and make simple meals that follow the USDA Dietary Guidelines and MyPlate food groups. If you want to find out more about these classes, talk to me any time after class.

Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

There are many benefits of living an active lifestyle

- improved muscle and bone health
- maintaining a healthy body weight
- increased lean body mass
- lower blood pressure
- lower risk of injury
- decreased risk of falling
- reduced stress
- increased energy
- improved self-confidence

“Adults should engage in some moderate or vigorous activity throughout the week. This looks different for everyone and is based upon personal preference or limitations.”

“Moderate and vigorous activities include movements where your heart is beating faster, and you are breathing harder than during your normal daily activities. It is recommended that adults get at least 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) activity weekly. Activities should be spread throughout the week (rather than done all at once) to maximize benefits.”

Examples of moderate physical activity include:

(Modify activities to best meet the abilities and lifestyle of the audience)

- Walking quickly
- Dancing
- Water aerobics

Vigorous activity examples include things like

- Jogging and running
- Swimming laps
- Riding a bike on hills

Another equally important type of physical activity is resistance or strength training.

- Physical activity that is designed to improve your body's muscular strength, power, and endurance.
- Equipment doesn't need to be expensive and can even include some household items.
- Inexpensive items such as exercise bands and hand weights can be used for strength training.
- It is recommended that you participate in strength training two or more days per week. This might include weightlifting, push-ups, sit-ups, squats, or lunges.

Balance and flexibility activities are also recommended at least twice each week.

- Balance is the ability for the body to remain in a stable position when performing movements.
- Flexibility is a form of physical activity achieved through stretching and moving a joint through its range of motion.
- Balance and flexibility exercises will help to decrease the risk of injury, increase range of motion, improve athletic ability, decrease soreness associated with other exercise and improve stability. This can be especially important as improved stability may allow many older Americans to live independently longer.

“Participation in this class can help meet the recommendations for balance and flexibility. This class will be taught _____. We will meet for _____ weeks. During this time together we will enjoy the benefits of active living, learn how to stretch, to warm up and cool down, participate in Tai Chi movements and increase your activity level.”

“Tai Chi group activity classes can also provide social support. We hope that as you get to know others in the class you will feel a connection to them. Each class will include time to visit and connect with others.”

Let's Begin

“I recommend that everyone begin with access to a chair. You may choose to participate sitting in the chair or standing. Either way, you will receive similar Tai Chi benefits. You may find that some moves require a lot of balance and having a chair to assist with stability in the beginning may be helpful. We also caution you to not do any movements that cause pain or discomfort. If you are unable to complete any of the

movements safely, please feel free to skip that movement or modify the movement to fit your ability.”

“Each class will start with warmup exercises. We will learn new moves each session and when we feel confident in the movement we will work on technique and breathing. When we put everything together the movements will flow easily as we transition from one movement to another.”

Begin the class with a Tai Chi salute (right hand fist into left hand flat palm). Invite the class to walk around and introduce themselves to other class members as they open and close their hands. You could provide a prompt to encourage discussion in later classes.

Next, complete the warmup exercise series explaining that warmups begin with the head and work down to the feet. Each area of the body (neck, shoulders, spine, hips, knees, and ankles) has two warmup exercises that are completed three times each.

Lead the class through movement sequence.

During each class you will teach 1-2 moves or review the moves previously taught. (For example, teach commencement and open and close during the first lesson and review these two moves and teach single whip the second lesson. For the third lesson, it may be best to just review these three moves until participants feel more comfortable with the sequence) It is often helpful to break the moves into just hand or just foot movements at first to facilitate better learning and technique. Some ways to assess readiness to move forward with new moves is to ask participants what they need help with, watch participants as they perform the moves, or ask them to teach one of the movements. This will give you an opportunity to provide positive feedback and address incorrect movements. Participants tend to need reminders about moving slowly, correct foot and hand placement, and to resist the urge to fully extend their arms. It should take several classes to teach all movements. Once the movements are taught you can begin to work on movement and breathing techniques.

Close Class

Conclude the class by doing the three cool down exercises. These can be done in a seated position to provide more stability. End the class with the Tai Chi salute (right hand fist into left hand flat palm). Thank participants for joining you in class. Remind them of the next class.

Encourage participants to practice Tai Chi moves on their own at home to become more familiar with the moves and improve their Tai Chi practice and benefits. This can allow you to focus on technique and breath in class. (Provide movement sequence handout).

After the final class of the series offer the Tai Chi Evaluation Survey