

## Perfect your balancing act

Tai chi chuan, or tai chi, is a Chinese movement discipline that has become a popular, low-impact way to improve strength, flexibility, and sense of balance. Several studies have shown that it can reduce both frailty and the number of falls experienced by older adults.

Older people who are the least fit stand to gain the most from regular tai chi classes, according to a report in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* (August 2002). Investigators from the Oregon Research Institute studied women and men over age 65 who took twice-weekly tai chi classes for six months. Everyone improved, compared to a wait-listed control group, but the researchers found that the greatest improvements occurred in people who began the study with the lowest level of physical function, the worst perception of their general health, and the most reports of depressive symptoms.

