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How To Discuss

Older adults highly value their independence and worry about the implications of being labeled as a fall risk. They may not openly discuss fears or concerns they have about falling. As such, it may be necessary for you to initiate the discussion.

It is important to highlight to your patient that the goal of this program is to keep him or her independent, active, and at home for as long as possible. You should emphasize that the program is safe and fun and that, although Tai Ji may seem unusual in Western culture, it has been shown to be very helpful for this purpose and in this form. It may also be useful to highlight the social benefits of the program and the fact that many patients like him or her have benefited.



WHAT IS IT?

Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance (pronounced *tye gee chuwan*) is a heavily-researched, **group-based falls prevention program** delivered by trained leaders that is designed to improve strength, balance, mobility, and daily functioning, and prevent falls. It represents a shift in focus of traditional Tai Ji Quan training and performance as it **transforms martial arts movements into a therapeutic regimen** aimed at **improving postural stability, awareness of body positioning in space, functional walking, movement symmetry and coordination, range of motion around the ankles and hips, and lower extremity muscle strength**. Participants attend **60-minute sessions at least twice per week for 24 weeks or longer**. Participants practice controlling their center of gravity during self-initiated sway and body shift exercises.



WHO IS IT FOR?

Tai Ji Quan is best suited for **community-dwelling older adults** and people with a **history of falls, balance disorders, leg muscle weakness, abnormal gait, or walking difficulty**. It is especially valuable to patients with **Parkinson's Disease**. The program can accommodate people with a mild level of mobility difficulty (e.g. occasional cane users). Because of the unique, recreation-like format of Tai Ji, the program may be especially appropriate for individuals who are **not receptive to attending "traditional" falls prevention classes**.



WHAT DOES IT DO?

The program focuses heavily on the development of **functional balance**. It has been **heavily researched**, with **initial, exploratory studies** showing the value of Tai Ji in **reducing falls**. Subsequent RCTs showed benefits in postural stability, functional capacity, and falls reduction in patients with **Parkinson's Disease** (**NEJM, 2011**). Multiple **translational studies** have **confirmed the program's value in older adults in community settings**, including measured improvements in **physical performance** and **as much as a 50% reduction in falls in community senior centers**. **Other analyses** have shown **cost-effectiveness ratios of >\$900 per fall prevented** and **shown** the program to be more cost-effective than either resistance training or stretching. **Pilot data** suggests the program may also have value in improving global **cognitive function**, although the evidence is weak.