

Tai Chi for Kids: Fun and Energizing Movements to Improve Health, Attention, and Learning

Tai Chi is a martial art that has been around for thousands of years. Many adults participate in Tai Chi for its stress-relieving, flexibility-enhancing, strength-building, cognitive-enhancing, and balance-building benefits. Did you know children can experience these same benefits through Tai Chi practice?

What is Tai Chi?

Tai Chi is an ancient martial art characterized by slow, dance-like, and mindful movements that coordinate posture and breath into a moving meditation. Its [physical health benefits](#) include improved body strength, flexibility, and balance.

Over the last 20 years, there has been a rise in childhood obesity, anxiety, and ADHD. Adding Tai Chi to mindfulness-based [school programs](#) helps children improve their physical fitness, decrease stress levels, and enhance their ability to focus, pay attention, and learn.

Five Ways Tai Chi May Benefit Children

Children of all ages may do Tai Chi to experience its physical, mental, and emotional benefits. It offers numerous health benefits, which include

- Increased muscle [strength, flexibility, balance](#), and coordination
- Releasing [muscle tension](#) after prolonged sitting
- An elevated sense of [calmness and relaxation](#) with improved concentration
- Improved [emotional regulation](#) with decreased anxiety
- Increased [energy and focus](#)

Tai Chi enhances creativity by incorporating imagery and visualization to engage children's imagination, such as pretending to be animals or sensing their energy

flow. It also encourages mindfulness by bringing children's attention to the present moment and their physical sensations.

How Does Tai Chi Improve Physical, Mental, and Emotional Health?

Children can build their strength and flexibility through practicing Tai Chi's rhythmic movements. These movements improve what's called 'chi' (energy flow in Traditional Chinese Medicine) throughout their bodies. Children will often experience this as warmth, tingling, or a fuzzy sensation in their hands, arms, and legs.

Tai Chi also encourages [non-competitive physical activity](#), allowing children to focus on their own achievements rather than constantly comparing themselves to their classmates.



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Expand Your Child's Imagination: Enjoy Three Fun Tai Chi Routines

These five-minute sessions are perfect for children to do after school or before homework to shake out their “wiggles.”

Safety Note: If your child feels uncomfortable with any of these activities, please have her stop immediately. These movements are designed to be gentle and should not cause pain.

“Tiger Stretch”

1. Stand with your feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold your hands before you and curl your fingers like tiger claws.
3. Inhale, gently look up, and stretch your arms overhead.
4. Exhale with a gentle “roar” like a tiger and imagine releasing any emotions or tension in your body into the ground as you squat and bring your hands down.
5. Repeat the above sequence ten times.

- **Engagement tip:** Encourage your child to really roar like a tiger!

“Picking Cherries”

1. Stand with your legs and feet slightly wider than your shoulders.
2. Reach toward the sky and imagine picking cherries from a tree.
3. As you reach with your left arm, let your head and neck gently sway right and then left when you reach with your right arm.

“The Tiger Returns to the Mountain”

1. Stand with your feet slightly more than shoulder-width apart.

2. Place your right hand over your left hand with your arms in front of your body.
 3. Raise your arms overhead, and while looking up, spread your arms apart like you are pushing apart the clouds.
 4. Keep your arms and hands soft and relaxed with slightly curved fingers and gently scoop the air downward. Squat as far as you can and imagine yourself as a crouching tiger on a mountaintop.
 5. Repeat the above sequence ten times.
- **Engagement tip:** Imagine a gentle breeze and the sun shining on your face as you crouch on the mountaintop.

Calming Children's Emotions Through Tai Chi

Research on Tai Chi for children is still in its early stages of development, but initial studies show promising results. Children who practice Tai Chi report feeling calmer and more relaxed. Preliminary research suggests that these benefits are more powerful when Tai Chi and mindfulness-based programs are combined.

Cognitive Benefits of Tai Chi

Tai Chi is beneficial for building focus and [concentration](#). Children who find the activity engaging are more likely to participate and reap the cognitive benefits. For example, many Tai Chi movements mimic animal poses, which children tend to enjoy.

Incorporating imagery, such as pretending to pick cherries from a tree, as a child shifts her weight and reaches her arm overhead, or envisioning how the energy flows through her body as she moves, further enhances engagement and imagination.

In a small study of 34 children with ADHD (ages 8-12), an eight-week [Tai Chi program](#) led to better motor coordination and fewer difficulties with attention,

impulse control, and hyperactivity. While more research is needed, these early results are encouraging for parents seeking non-medication approaches.

What Types of Tai Chi are Suitable for Kids?

Creative Tai Chi sequences that engage children's imagination and energize them will be the most enjoyable and fun to perform.

[Five Animal Frolics](#) is a fun routine for children to enjoy Tai Chi-style movements. The five animals are the tiger, deer, bear, monkey, and bird. The animal frolics are an excellent routine for children to use their creativity and imagination while pretending to move like these animals do in nature.

Four key points for children to remember when doing Tai Chi

- Use deep belly breathing – breathe in through your nose, allowing your belly to expand slightly more than your chest, and then exhale through your mouth
- Maintain an upright standing posture, pretending to grow tall like a tree
- Listen closely as the instructor guides you to match your breathing in and out with your posture and body movements
- Most important of all, have **FUN!**

How to Find an Instructor

When looking for a Tai Chi instructor for your child, prioritize those who are friendly and enthusiastic about working with kids, can keep children motivated, and hold certification from a professional organization, such as the [American Tai Chi & Qigong Association](#). Ideally, they should have 1-2 years of experience teaching children specifically.

Ultimately, the key to an engaging, enjoyable routine is to make the moves relatable to the children participating in the Tai Chi program.

The Final Word

Tai Chi offers a unique path to better physical health, emotional balance, and improved focus through playful, non-competitive movement. Whether at home or school, these ancient practices can help modern kids find calm and confidence in their growing bodies.

Ready to get started? Try these three visualizations with your child this week, or search for certified instructors in your area on the [American Tai Chi & Qigong Association](#). Even 5-10 minutes a few times a week can make a difference in your child's stress levels and ability to focus.

Further Reading

[Executive function in children: Why it matters and how to help - Harvard Health.](#)
[The Health Benefits of Tai Chi - Harvard Health Publishing](#)
<https://www.kidsmartialartsguide.com/tai-chi-for-kids/>

Video References

[Simple 13-Min Qi Gong Routine for](#)
[HoSimple 13-Min Qi Gong Routine for Kids with Qi Gong Teacher Lee Holden](#)
[How To Do Kids Tai Chi](#)
[Tai Chi for Kids - Everyone has fun!](#)
[Tai Chi 4 Kidz Video | Dr Paul Lam | Introduction](#)

5 Ways Tai Chi May Benefit Your Child

- Improves muscle strength & flexibility
- Creates a sense of calm
- Decreases anxiety
- Increases focus & concentration
- Increases energy

References

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