



Photo by JAVE LEE

# Relieve Lingering COVID-19 SYMPTOMS with Pleasure Tai Chi

By Tai Chi Master Tommy Kirchhoff

For 17 years, Kirchhoff has been refining Healing Exercise, a therapeutic/medicinal movement program based on the Chinese martial art that's clinically proven to relieve a long list of illnesses. Then the pandemic struck. As 29 million Americans got sick and many struggled with "long-haul" COVID-19 symptoms, Kirchhoff felt a growing sense of urgency. He spoke with a researcher who found Tai Chi boosts immunity to shingles virus in older adults. The doctor told him Tai Chi would likely have similar benefits for COVID patients.

"When you can get someone to relax, all these magical things start to happen — with the relaxation response, the body starts to heal itself more like when you were younger," he says. "We have all these clinical studies showing that it helps with breathing, energy level, and pain relief. That is COVID long-haul in a nutshell."

The pandemic has intensified Kirchhoff's mission to educate seniors, doctors, and everyone about the health benefits of Tai Chi. He believes the crisis presents an opportunity to get Americans, particularly seniors, to change how they view taking care of their health.

"There is an old saying — an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. How can we get people to start investing 20 minutes a day in themselves to prevent all these problems?"

Tai Chi is often described as "meditation in motion," but might well be called "meditation in motion," Harvard Medical School notes. The list of ailments Tai Chi can relieve includes arthritis, back and neck pain, chronic pain, high blood pressure, COPD, dementia, fibromyalgia, neuropathy, and Parkinson's Disease. Tai Chi improves posture and balance

while preventing falls. It can help people suffering from heart disease, multiple sclerosis, stroke, and immune system disorders to regain health.

Today, more people are embracing Tai Chi to relieve stress and maintain health and wellness. As researchers study and verify the myriad benefits of Tai Chi, seniors who practice Healing Medicine testify to its effectiveness in helping them overcome health problems.

"Tai-Chi is self care, like brushing your teeth," Kirchhoff says. "It is something you can do every day to take care of yourself."

**A** new study of 2 million coronavirus patients calculates 23 percent of those infected still have lingering symptoms, known collectively as Post COVID or "Long Haul" COVID. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates 115 million people in the U.S. have been infected, so as many as 26 million people may have ongoing issues like brain fog, tiredness, headaches, and body aches, dizziness, and shortness of breath.

A new study is looking into why Tai Chi has outstanding advantages for people recovering from COVID-19. Tai Chi is clinically proven to relieve pain, fatigue, sleep problems, and so much more. Studies suggest it increases energy levels and can help greatly with COPD (chronic shortness of breath). Tai Chi's meditative aspects can improve mental focus and cognitive function. Medical experts who study Tai Chi say its benefits are vast and hard to oversell. One group of researchers even proved that Tai Chi boosts immunity against the shingles (herpes) virus; Michael Oxman, M.D., of the University of San Diego, said in an interview that Tai Chi would likely also boost immunity against the coronavirus.

### Tai Chi – Pleasurable, not boring

First, Tai Chi is not just the slow, choreographed sequence of movements for which it is often stereotyped (as boring). All quality Tai Chi practice also includes special, repetitive, warm-up exercises known as QiGong (pronounced “chee-gung”), which translates as “energy practice.” While Tai Chi itself is a form of QiGong, the repetitive QiGong exercises are almost more important than the Tai Chi “dance.” The exercises are simple and relaxing and allow the practitioner to breathe deeply, relax deeply, and develop Qi-energy more easily.

Most people find Tai Chi exercise soothing and pleasurable the very first time. With quality instruction and daily practice, many start to feel the Qi-energy in their fingers and hands within the first few weeks. Qi-energy is a wonderful sensation that feels tingly and sensitive, soft yet strong, relaxed but full of potential. While this might sound like poppycock-hokey, Qi is not difficult to develop, and it feels amazingly different than everything else. With continued practice, Qi-energy can be felt everywhere in the body.

Try to relax as much as you can right now. Good Tai Chi instruction will help you develop your relaxation to levels you never thought were possible. When you can relax deeply, all these magical things start to happen. The relaxation response triggers the body to start to heal itself more like when you were younger. As stress diminishes, the sympathetic nervous system calms down, delivers less corticosteroid, and allows your heart and lungs to function better. The deep, relaxed breathing ushers in much more oxygen to supercharge the blood, the brain, and bodily functions. When you practice Tai Chi exercises, your face should be completely relaxed, but the experience really makes you want to smile. It just feels good.

**WHEN YOU LEARN THE PRINCIPLES WELL AND PRACTICE THEM ALL IN CONJUNCTION, YOU WILL FIND A NEW HEALTH, VITALITY, AND POWER LEVEL.**

Higher-quality QiGong exercises loosen and stretch the hips and waist, allowing the whole body to align properly. The term “posture” gets thrown around a lot. Doctors and chiropractors and yoga teachers, and athletic trainers all seem to disagree on optimum posture. Great posture should be likened to a tall tree; the roots support the base of the structure. Trees (and buildings) are vertically straight, not curved. Posture should be vertical, comfortable, and sustainable. With proper Tai Chi posture, the joints all begin to reorganize themselves, starting at the waist and working both downward and upward. Physical balance gets boosted, and chronic aches and pains melt away.

Tai Chi is not boring, but it’s not easy. Adherence to its highly developed system of principles is what makes Tai Chi and QiGong exercise recognizable and so beneficial for the mind and body. Generally, the principles are:

- Every action must be controlled with the mind and the intention.
- The use of force and strength is forbidden.
- The mind controls the waist, and the waist controls the body (think “coordination”).
- Tai Chi and QiGong exercise requires the deepest relaxation. Queues are built into the movements and practice, again and again, to remind you to relax.
- Postural decrees exist for every part body, including how to hollow your chest, “hang” your head, sink your shoulders, empty your hands and your feet—even how to position your tongue.
- Continuous movement is essential. Whether practicing the exercises or the Tai Chi dance, the movements must be continuous and unbroken.

When you learn the principles well and practice them all in conjunction, you will find a new health, vitality, and power level. And contrary to widespread advice on the internet that you must learn from a live instructor, you can learn Tai Chi exercise very well from Healing Exercise videos and DVDs.

Like the old saying — “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” Tai Chi exercise is self-care, like brushing your teeth. It is something you can do every day to take good care of yourself. Investing 20 minutes a day to prevent health problems or relieve lingering COVID symptoms makes good sense. And you will enjoy it.

Always consult your physician before beginning any exercise program. This general information is not intended to diagnose any medical condition or to replace your healthcare professional. Consult with your healthcare professional to design an appropriate exercise prescription.



Tai Chi Master and Wellness Expert **Tommy Kirchoff** spent two decades refining Healing Exercise, a therapeutic, medicinal-movement program based on Tai Chi. He is on a mission to educate everyone about the proven health benefits of this gentle martial art.

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