

Tying Exercise to Culture Boosts Participation In study, 96% of elderly Chinese stuck with Tai Chi program

(HealthDay News) -- Tailoring exercise to specific cultural backgrounds may encourage older women to start and continue a fitness program, claims a study that found the vast majority of elderly Chinese women sticking with their Tai Chi lessons over the long term.

The study, from the University of California, San Francisco School (UCSF) of Nursing, included 27 ethnic Chinese women, average age 64, who took part in one-hour Tai Chi sessions three times a week for three months. All the women had at least one major risk factor for coronary heart disease.

Many exercise programs for women with coronary heart disease have high dropout rates. But 96 percent of the women in this study completed the Tai Chi program, and there was a waiting list to join it, the researchers report.

"Tai Chi has been widely practiced in China for centuries, and is a popular form of exercise there," Ruth E. Taylor-Piliae, a doctoral candidate in the UCSF School of Nursing, said in a prepared statement.

"The exercise program was provided at a community center where a large number of Cantonese-speaking senior citizens gather daily. They readily embraced this form of exercise, and were excited. Activities within various cultures that are the equivalent of brisk walking most likely will spark interest and be readily accepted," Taylor-Piliae said.

The study was reported Feb. 18 at the Second International Conference on Women, Heart Disease and Stroke in Orlando, Fla.

More information

The U.S. National Women's Health Information Center has more about women and exercise.

By Robert Preidt

SOURCE: American Heart Association, news release, Feb. 18, 2005
Last Updated: December 2005
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