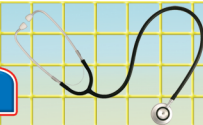


Health Bulletin



How Strong Is Your Chi? Learning Tai Chi And Qigong To Prevent Slips, Trips And Falls

(NAPSA)—Many older adults have found benefit from the centuries-old Chinese martial arts tai chi and qigong. “Chi” or “qi” (chee) means “life energy.” “Qigong” (chee-goong) literally means “life energy cultivation.” Tai chi consists of a series of flowing movements while qigong focuses on the repetition of isolated movements and breathing.

For example, Robert Johnson, M.D., Kaiser Permanente chief of Palliative Care in Walnut Creek, Calif., has practiced tai chi and qigong since the 1970s. He believes these mind-body exercises promote good health, flexibility, strength and balance, which help reduce the risk of falling among seniors.

Each year, one out of three adults, age 65 and older, falls due to lack of balance or other reasons. Consider that a record 11,000 baby boomers turn 65 and become Medicare eligible every day, and that can add up to a lot of falls and serious injuries.

“We spend most of our day in sedentary jobs. Many of us sit in front of a computer or television for hours at a time,” Dr. Johnson said. “To age well, we need to



Dr. Robert Johnson says traditional Chinese exercises can improve flexibility, strength and balance.

move, stretch and keep our joints lubricated and flexible. Otherwise, our muscles, joints and tendons become stiff and brittle, and that can lead to falls and disabilities.”

Dr. Johnson recommends moving the joints in a circular motion. For example, place the hands on the knees and rotate the knees together in a clockwise and then counterclockwise motion. Also, try sitting in a squat position and stand up slowly to strengthen the quadriceps.

At share.kaiserpermanente.org/article/how-strong-is-your-chi/ you can see a short video in which Dr. Johnson demonstrates a few basic exercises and explains why they're helpful.

Along with doing exercises that

promote flexibility, seniors can also help prevent falls and serious injuries by taking a few simple precautions at home:

Make Your Home Safe

- Reduce tripping hazards such as throw rugs, raised doorway thresholds, or loose carpet.
- Keep paths clear of electrical cords and clutter.
- Add grab bars where necessary—in hallways, stairways and bathtubs.
- Add a rubber bath mat in the shower or tub.
- Improve lighting throughout the house and use night-lights in hallways and bathrooms.
- Keep a phone and flashlight by the bed.

Kaiser Permanente offers tai chi and qigong classes at several of its medical facilities. Visit www.kp.org to find classes in your area and learn more about other exercises for strength and balance as well as preventing falls. You can also check out www.kp.org/carestories for more health-related videos. For questions and advice about a specific condition or starting a new exercise regimen, consult with your physician.