

Low-Impact Exercises Are Fun and Healthy

Not everyone is made for high-level exercising. But you can become fit without bouncing around in a leotard, battering your joints. Forget all the huffing, puffing, lugging, lifting, and straining. Movement therapy is a gentle – yet effective – group of sports that include yoga, tai chi, and Pilates. Just don't be fooled by their mild manner. These activities can whip you into shape without breaking a sweat.

All three have ancient Eastern roots and are merely different interpretations of the same principle: keeping your body and mind in harmony naturally leads to better health.

It wasn't until recently that modern science confirmed the many physical benefits of yoga, tai chi, and Pilates. With them, you can improve your balance, flexibility, and strength – no matter what your age, weight, or fitness level.

No Pain – but great gain

Yoga, tai chi, and Pilates are gentle enough for anyone to try. If you consider yourself in bad health or disabled in some way, you're a perfect candidate for these movement therapies. You can ease into the programs slowly and set your own pace. It's easy to stick with them and you'll see improvement quickly.

Here are just some of the benefits you will get from these soothing approaches to fitness.

- When you were a child, tripping and falling meant just another minor scrape. But as you get older, taking a tumble can have serious and crippling effects. If your sense of balance is as bad as Humpty Dumpty's, these are the safest forms of exercise for you.

Just like the trick to growing tomatoes is to keep the main stalk strong, the trick to great balance is to keep your core muscles strong. The bands of muscle in your abdomen, lower back, and buttocks are the center of strength and control for the rest of your body.

All three examples of movement therapy are relatively stationary, but because they strengthen your core muscles, your balance will improve quickly – preventing falls – and you'll develop greater flexibility and strength. Soon you will be moving with confidence again.

- Tai chi and yoga are especially recommended for people with arthritis. Gentle yoga can improve arthritis in your hands, for example, and tai chi's precise, flowing movements help keep your joints limber, relieve your pain, and keep you active.
- The dance-like stretches, poses, and maneuvers within each of these movement therapies will gently strengthen and tone your body. Pilates is especially good as a strength-training workout.
- Add yoga or Pilates to your exercise regimen if you need to improve your heart health.
- In today's hectic world, it may be hard to squeeze an extra 30 minutes of exercise into your schedule – at least without feeling even more stress. The beautiful thing about movement therapy is that it combines stress relief with exercise, so you kill two birds with one stone.

All the activities – tai chi, yoga, and Pilates – are done slowly, with intense focus on proper breathing and posture. They all relax your body and calm your mind.

As you can see, you can boost your overall health with these joyful, health-giving movements.

Things to know before you give it a go

Just to be safe, make sure that you take these precautions before starting any new exercise program.

- Get your doctor's approval on your fitness plan, especially if you've badly injured your back, neck, knees, or shoulders in the past.
- The stretches, poses, and movements of these therapies should not hurt. If you feel pain, stop and check your technique before continuing.

- Pilates is the most intense of the three exercise forms. You may want to try one of the less strenuous programs first if you are out of shape.
- Be forewarned, you might get addicted to these calming sports.

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About the Author

Raymond Lee is one of the foremost experts in the health and fitness industry and is a writer specializing in body health, muscle development and dieting. He has spent countless of time and efforts conducting research and share his insightful and powerful secrets to benefit men and women all over the world. He is currently the author of the latest edition of "Neck Exercises and Workouts." Visit <http://www.bodyfixes.com> for more information.