

# HEALTH

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**A study showed practising tai chi dropped participants' depression scores and elevated their vigour.**

# Grasp a sparrow's tail

## Tai chi helps those with systolic heart failure

**BY AMINA KHAN**

If you're suffering from chronic systolic heart failure, tai chi may help.

Although it may not improve your performance on a six-minute walk test, it will probably improve your mood, your daily activity and quality of life, according to a new study published online Monday in the Archives of Internal Medicine.

Researchers from Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Brigham and Women's Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital looked at 100 patients diagnosed with systolic heart failure. Half of

them were placed in a 12-week tai chi exercise program, performing such moves as "washing the body with qi," "grasp sparrow's tail" and "wave hands like clouds." The other half was placed in a 12-week educational program where they were taught about heart-failure-related issues, including low-sodium diets and heart-rhythm problems.

They found that those who took tai chi saw their depression-related mood score drop from 2 to 0 (which is a good thing), while those who had taken the class actually saw their scores go up, from 3 to 4. The tai-chi practitioners saw their vigour rise slightly from 8.5 to 9, while those

on the heart-failure lesson plan actually saw their measured vigour drop from 8 to -2. Ouch.

In any case, mood and what's called "exercise self-efficacy" are, of course, important factors to improve when you're dealing with as depressing and physically limiting a disease as systolic heart failure, which can cause such symptoms as shortness of breath, fatigue, nausea and swelling. All of those can severely affect quality of life on a daily basis — and anything to improve that could be well worth it.

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