Tai Chi May Help Maintain Bone Mineral Density in Postmenopausal Women

Tai chi may be a safe alternative to conventional exercise for maintaining bone mineral density (BMD) in postmenopausal women. Bone mineral density is one of the key indicators of bone strength. Low BMD is associated with osteoporosis, a bone disease characterized by reduced bone strength that can lead to fractures, which are a significant cause of disability in older people.

Exercise is an important component of osteoporosis prevention and treatment. Tai chi is a mind-body practice that originated in China as a martial art. It consists of slow and gentle body moves, while breathing deeply and meditating (tai chi is sometimes called "moving meditation").

Peter Wayne, Ph.D., and colleagues conducted a systematic review of research looking at the effect of tai chi on BMD. They found that tai chi may be an effective, safe, and practical intervention for maintaining BMD in postmenopausal women. They note that the evidence is preliminary because the research they reviewed was of limited scope and quality, but enough evidence of effectiveness exists to warrant further research.

The authors further note that the benefits of tai chi appeared similar to those of conventional exercise. However, tai chi may also improve balance, reduce fall frequency, and increase musculoskeletal strength.

References

Peter M. Wayne, Douglas P. Kiel, and David E. Krebs, et al. The Effects of Tai Chi on Bone Mineral Density in Postmenopausal Women: A Systematic Review. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, May 2007.

For More Information

Tai Chi for Health Purposes

Osteoporosis Overview (NIAMS)

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