

# ARTICLE-LIFESTYLE PRESCRIPTIONS

**Go to a doctor these days and you are likely to get a prescription that you will fill at the greengrocer or fitness gym rather than the local chemist. This new move recognises that while prescription drugs have an important role to play, they are fighting an uphill battle if it is our lifestyle that is making us sick in the first place.**

As most prescription drugs have some sort of side effect (even if it is only a financial one!) it makes sense to only take such remedies when we have to, however, since the only side effect of lifestyle prescriptions is “good health” the sooner we are on such prescriptions the better. Prevention is better than cure!

Creating preventative lifestyle prescriptions only becomes a problem if you fall into the trap of thinking that healthy activities, like exercise, have only specific benefits such as prescription drugs have. Then you have to include different exercises for all the conditions that you think you might get. This all to common view is reinforced by visits to gyms where the focus may be narrowed to working on this or that set of muscles. What is forgotten is that exercise has a holistic effect, improving not only the obvious things such as muscle strength and the cardiovascular system but also the respiratory, digestive and immune systems. What we need to do is look for exercise techniques that have wide holistic benefit.

Also, when selecting exercise to keep or maintain ones health there is a different focus to using an exercise to “prove one is fit”. Exercises should not exhaust nor should they put body systems such as joints and the cardiovascular system at risk. Exercises such as Tai Chi have been shown to be beneficial in helping prevent or alleviate many conditions including; arthritis, asthma, diabetes, depression, osteoporosis cardiovascular and back problems, to name only a few. Tai Chi is also one of the safest exercises to perform and also improves vitality and the sense of well being. Virtually everyone is fit enough to do Tai Chi or a modified version thereof (though you should always take medical advice if you have a preexisting condition).

Tai Chi is a “mind body” exercise. When you have done one push up you are not going to find anything excitingly new in the next push up. If you swim one lap of the pool the next lap is not going to be much different but with Tai Chi getting to know the movements is only the first step. There is always a deeper awareness, a more creative aspect to be discovered. It is a health art as much as a health exercise. There are not many arts where you can be at your personal peak in your nineties.

In fact, Tai Chi seems tailor made for the concept of lifestyle prescriptions. A physical and mental exercise system that will not only help protect against or alleviate most modern lifestyle health problems, but that will keep you relaxed, supple, flexible and vital throughout your life while also providing you with an activity that is interesting and fun to do.