

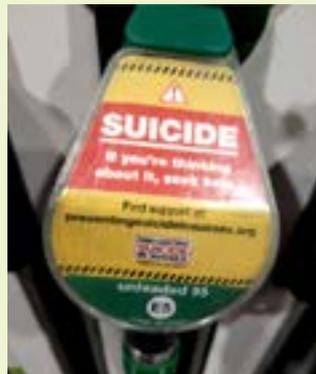
Mental Health during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Mental health has been an essential programme within the WHO's agenda since its founding in 1948. But in the light of COVID-19 pandemic, a renewed focus on mental health would be particularly welcomed (Embody Magazine, Autumn 2020, p28). In the UK, apart from the fear and uncertainty regarding infection itself, measures brought in to contain the spread of the virus, such as social isolation, shielding and lockdown, have been psychologically challenging. These government measures / rules add to existing anxieties and stresses especially when faced with the financial burden of being a carer / caregiver with 1 in 8 adults currently looking after someone without pay (Assoc of Carers).

Data shows that over 4 in 5 (84.2%) adults are worried about the effects that coronavirus (COVID-19) is having on their life right now, with more than half (51.3%) saying it affected their wellbeing and nearly half (46.9%) reporting high levels of anxiety (Embody Magazine, Summer 2020 p29). Public Health's England "Every Mind Matters" website includes NHS tips and advice on looking after mental wellbeing and supporting family and loved ones during the pandemic www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters.

Meanwhile shocking data from the Office of National Statistics shows that suicide rate for men in England and Wales in 2019 was the highest in two decades. They accounted for about three-quarters of suicide deaths registered in 2019; 4,303 men compared with 1,388 women.

People with mental health conditions or psychosocial disabilities have long been stigmatised. The challenge therefore is how to improve mental health awareness among not only the public but also perhaps more importantly the politicians (local), service providers and decision makers.



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Passive stretching effects on blood flow may help prevent heart diseases and diabetes

Fascinating research published in the Journal of Physiology shows that 12 weeks of simple passive stretching helps improve blood flow by making it easier for arteries to dilate thus decreasing their stiffness.

Researchers at the University of Milan assigned 39 healthy participants of both sexes to two groups. The control group did not undergo any stretching. The experimental group performed leg stretches five times a week for 12 weeks. Researchers evaluated the effect of passive stretching on the blood flow locally and in the upper arm. They found that the arteries in both the lower leg and upper arm had increased blood flow and dilation when stimulated, along with decreased stiffness.

Both of these changes may have implications for diseases such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes as they are characterised by changes in blood flow control due to an impaired vascular system.

IHCAN August 2020, p38

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Social isolation increases the risk of heart attacks, strokes, and death from all causes

A German study presented at the European Academy of Neurology (EAN) Virtual Congress, found that those who are socially isolated are almost 50% more likely to die from any cause and are more than 40% likely to have a heart attack or stroke than those who are socially integrated. Lack of financial support also independently increased the risk of cardiovascular events.

"We have known for some time that feeling lonely or lacking contact with close friends and family can have an impact on your physical health" commented Dr Gronewold. "What this study tells us is that having strong social relationships is of high importance for your health and similar to the role of classical factors such as having a healthy blood pressure, acceptable cholesterol levels and a normal weight".

Performed within the Heinz Nixdorf Recall Study (HNR) and led by Dr Janine Gronewold and Prof Dirk Hermann from the University Hospital in Essen, Germany, the research analysed data from 4,316 individuals (average age 59). The participants entered the study with no known cardiovascular disease and were followed for an average of 13 years.

Prof Jockel added, "This observation is of particular interest in the present discussion on the COVID-19 pandemic, where social contacts are or have been relevantly restricted in most societies".



IHCAN June 2020, p9

The importance of physical activity exercise among older people

As populations continue to extend life expectancy, a central concern is whether the added time comprises years of healthy living whilst maintaining a good quality of life into old age.

An editorial by BioMed Research International focuses on lifestyle and in particular physical activity (PA) as a driver for a healthy and long life for older people. PA encompasses exercise, sports and physical activities performed as part of daily living, occupation, leisure, or active transportation.

Improvements in mental health, emotional, psychological, and social well-being and cognitive function are also associated with regular PA. Despite these health benefits, PA levels amongst older adults remain below the current recommendations from WHO.

Inactivity and aging increase the risk of chronic disease, and older people may have multiple chronic conditions. The exercise recommendations from WHO include both aerobic exercise and strength exercise as well as balance exercises to reduce the risk of falls.

Participation in PA and exercise can contribute towards maintaining good quality of life. In particular exercise training in older people has been associated with health benefits such as decreased cardiovascular mortality. Thus promoting exercise among the older population is an important public health and clinical issue. The challenge, however, is how to get older people with comorbidities to exercise more regularly.

Birgitta Langhammer, Astrid Bergland, and Elisabeth Rydwikm

Sweden, Hindawi BioMed Research International Volume 2018, Article ID 7856823, 3 pages <https://doi.org/10.1155/2018/7856823>



Tai Chi and Qi Gong

Here at CWI we are a huge fan of tai chi and qi gong. If you ever attended our "Wellbeing Days" or the "Forget Me Not Cafés" you would have at some stage participated in these gentle ancient Chinese movements. It's hard to imagine that tai chi can burn off a single calorie or strengthen muscles, but this exercise programme is far more dynamic than it looks, so says Stephanie Watson, Executive Editor, Harvard Women's Health Watch.

"The slowness that you see from the outside can be deceptive," says Dr. Peter Wayne, research director of the Osher Center for Integrative Medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School. As an aerobic workout, tai chi is roughly the equivalent of a brisk walk (depending on the intensity at which you perform it). And as a resistance training routine, some studies have found it similar to more vigorous forms of weight training, says Dr. Wayne, who is also founder and director of the Tree of Life Tai Chi Center in Somerville, Massachusetts and co-author of The Harvard Medical School Guide to Tai Chi.

Below you can find some links to the same tai chi and qi gong exercises that we have been teaching for the last 8 years.

Tai Chi Shibashi Qigong Full 18 Movements Seated – YouTube (fast version)

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=T2SscwGK4oE>

Tai Chi Shibashi Qigong Seated - FULL - YouTube

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=aOApEFBI2SI>

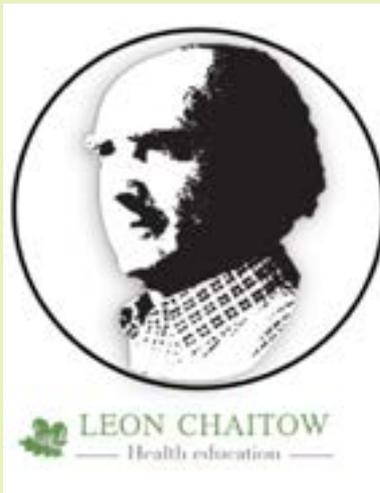
Tai Chi Tip - Where to Place Your Tongue in Tai Chi - YouTube

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=coilBaPzsKM&list=PLZGxERTakiPZ4O9x8P44HVqZnWTKMLKiu&index=4>

4 directions / corners Tai Chi

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=V0qQ38qkR58>

The Leon Chaitow Collection



Breathing pattern disorders (the extreme form of which is hyperventilation), automatically increase levels of anxiety and apprehension, which may be sufficient to alter motor control and to markedly influence balance control / balance system functioning.

Hyperventilation results in respiratory alkalosis, leading to reduced

oxygenation of tissues (including the brain), smooth muscle constriction, heightened pain perception, speeding up of spinal reflexes, increased excitability of the corticospinal system, hyperirritability of motor and sensory axons, changes in serum calcium and magnesium levels, and encourage the development of myofascial trigger points – all or any of which, in one way or another, are capable of modifying normal motor control of skeletal musculature.

In the second part of our series, Leon explains how and what symptoms result from shallow breathing and demonstrates Four Simple, Safe & Effective Exercises for Better Breathing. You can download the exercises from our website www.tcwi.org.uk

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