



**HEALTHY HOT BREAKFAST**

Three morning warm-ups, page 49



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THE ART & SCIENCE OF HEALTHY LIVING

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## The Decline of Falling

You're only as young as you are flexible and mobile. Seniors who hurt themselves falling down often take a long time to recover, and during convalescence their overall health declines. To address this, South Korean researchers tested whether practicing Sun-style T'ai Chi helped older adults avoid falling. This Chinese martial art uses slow, flowing move-

people with an average age of 78. Then half the group learned and practiced T'ai Chi three times per week while the other half participated in the residential home's routine recreational activities—including optional range-of-motion exercises. After 12 weeks, the knees and ankles of the 29 T'ai Chi practitioners were stronger and more flexible than the 30 people



ments that gradually improve balance, flexibility and muscle tone.

The researchers first tested strength, flexibility and mobility of fall-prone

who didn't practice. In addition, risk of falling declined in the T'ai Chi group, and they felt more confident they could avoid future falls.



## Relief for Your Aching Back

Hands-on physical therapy is great for treating short-term lower-back pain—but it's not the only choice. Another successful option is a pain-management program, also supervised by physical therapists, that includes general fitness exercises (such as walking or swimming) plus education on how to reduce anxiety that arises from injury.

Recovery from back pain is often hampered because patients fear they'll feel worse if they start exercising. To en-

courage a return to normal activity, the researchers tested a plan to teach patients pain-coping skills and then counsel them through recuperation. Of the 329 back-pain sufferers who completed the study, 68 percent said they felt either much or completely better a year later using the behavioral pain-management program—almost the exact percentage of people (69 percent) who successfully recovered with the help of manual physical therapy.

## Good News For Pets

Kindred Spirit, Kindred Care



*Kindred Spirit, Kindred Care: Making Health Decisions on Behalf of Our Animal Companions* by Shannon Nakaya, DVM (New World Library, 2005). It takes a philosophical and spiritual look at issues surrounding compassionate animal care.



*How to Meditate With Your Dog* by James Jacobson (Maui Media, 2005). Meditation (or hound lounging) is simply the most relaxing and, so we hear from our canine friends, mutually beneficial practice you can do with your dog. A delightful means

of delivering the message that anyone can derive benefit from meditating.