

# Tai Chi Walking for Seniors

A gentle starter routine: three in-place moves and the slow tai chi walk, with a four-week plan.

## What tai chi walking is

Tai chi walking is a slow stepping practice taken from tai chi. Each step lands **heel first**, rolls down to the whole foot, and only then does your weight move onto it. Moving that slowly asks your legs and balance to work on every step, gently.

It is not a weight-loss workout. Its value is practice at the movement most falls happen in: shifting weight from one foot to the other.

## Before you start

- Clear a straight path about **6 feet (2 metres)** long. Move rugs, cords and clutter.
- Stand beside a **kitchen counter, a rail or a sturdy chair back** you can hold. Use it every time until you feel steady.
- Wear flat shoes with good grip, or go barefoot on a non-slip floor. No socks on smooth floors.
- Rest one hand on your belly and cover it with the other, or keep one hand on your support.

## Breathing and pace

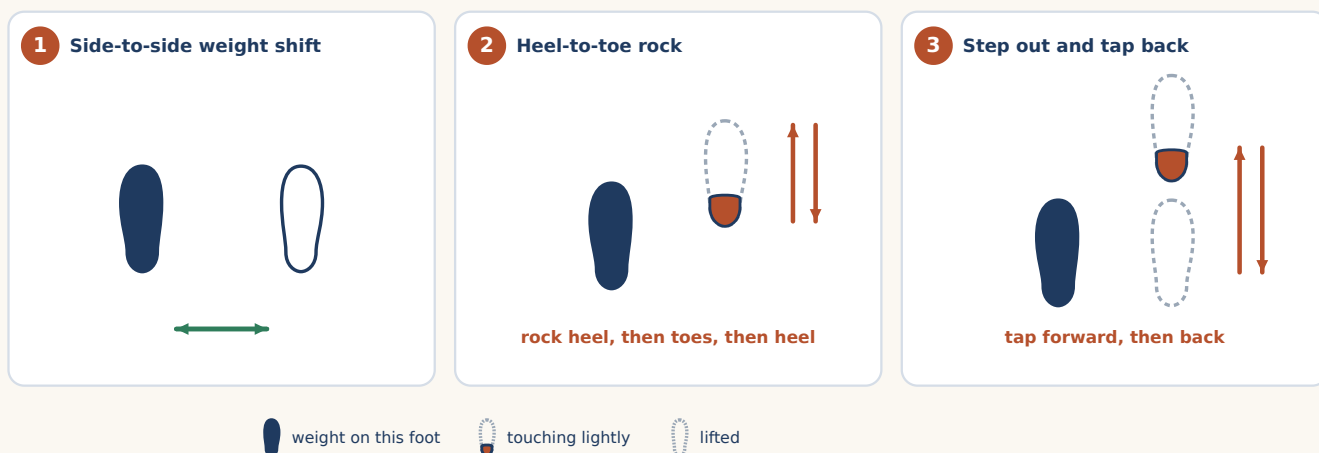
- Move **slowly**. A count of about four for each part of a step is plenty.
- Breathe slowly and evenly through each step. **Never hold your breath.**
- Stand tall, look ahead rather than down at your feet, and keep the knees soft, not locked.

**Check with your doctor first** if you have had a fall, feel dizzy, have a heart condition or uncontrolled blood pressure, or have had recent surgery. **Stop** if you feel pain, dizziness, chest discomfort or unsteadiness, and sit down.

## PART 1

# Three moves on the spot

Do these standing beside your counter or chair back, one hand resting on it. They teach the weight shift the walk is built on.



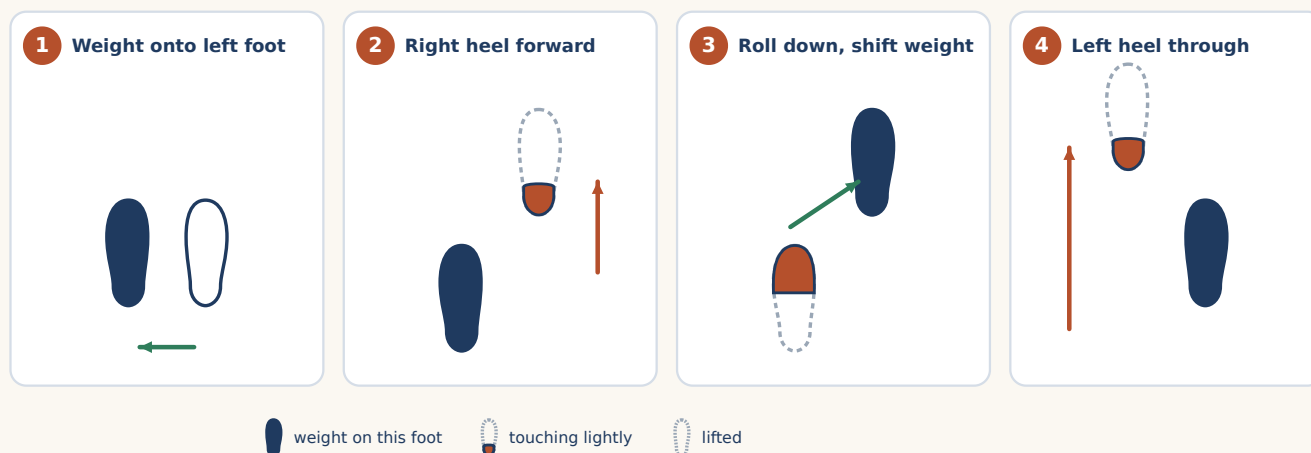
- 1 Side-to-side weight shift.** Feet hip-width apart. Slowly move your weight onto the left foot until the right foot feels light, then slowly across to the right. **8 times each way.**
- 2 Heel-to-toe rock.** Weight on the left foot. Place the right heel lightly ahead of you, then roll down onto the whole foot and up onto the ball of the foot, and back to the heel. Keep most of your weight on the left foot. **6 times, then swap feet.**
- 3 Step out and tap back.** Weight on the left foot. Step the right foot a small way forward, touch the heel down lightly, then bring it back beside the left. **6 times, then swap feet.**

**Tip:** if any move feels wobbly, make it smaller rather than faster, and keep both hands on your support.

## PART 2

# The tai chi walk

Walk slowly along your cleared path beside the counter or rail. Each step has the same four parts.



- 1 Weight onto one foot.** Stand with feet together. Shift your weight onto the left foot until the right foot feels light.
- 2 Heel first.** Step the right foot forward a short way and touch the **heel** down. Keep your weight on the back (left) foot.
- 3 Roll down, then shift.** Lower the right foot until it is flat, then slowly move your weight forward onto it. The left heel lifts as you do.
- 4 Step through.** Bring the left foot forward and place its heel down ahead of you. Repeat with the other foot.

**How far:** start with **6 steps**, stop, and turn round with small steps (do not twist on one foot). Walk back the same way. Short steps are better than long ones.

## YOUR PLAN

# Four weeks, one step at a time

| Week          | How often                  | What to do                                                                                  |
|---------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Week 1</b> | 3 days, about 5 minutes    | Part 1 only, holding your support with both hands.                                          |
| <b>Week 2</b> | 3-4 days, about 10 minutes | Part 1, then the tai chi walk for 6 steps and back, beside your support.                    |
| <b>Week 3</b> | 4 days, 10-15 minutes      | Part 1, then the walk the length of your path, two or three times.                          |
| <b>Week 4</b> | 4-5 days, about 15 minutes | The full routine. Keep a hand near your support; do not let go of it until you feel steady. |

## Tick off each session

| Week     | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| <b>1</b> |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| <b>2</b> |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| <b>3</b> |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| <b>4</b> |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |

**Stop and sit down** if you feel pain, dizziness, chest discomfort, breathlessness or unsteadiness. Rest days are part of the plan.

**Prefer to sit?** Chair tai chi gives you the same slow, breath-led movement without standing. Free routine at [elderlydaily.com/seniors-daily/printable-chair-tai-chi-for-seniors](https://elderlydaily.com/seniors-daily/printable-chair-tai-chi-for-seniors)

Full guide, with the research on what tai chi does and does not do: [elderlydaily.com/seniors-daily/tai-chi-walking-for-seniors](https://elderlydaily.com/seniors-daily/tai-chi-walking-for-seniors)