

How Music Affects Us and Promotes Health

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Music is one of the few activities that involves using the whole brain. It is intrinsic to all cultures and can have surprising benefits not only for learning language, improving memory, and focusing attention, but also for physical coordination and development.

Of course, music can be distracting if it's too loud or too jarring or if it competes for our attention with what we're trying to do. But for the most part, exposure to many kinds of music has beneficial effects

Pain Therapy

Overall, music does have positive effects on pain management. Music can help reduce both the sensation and distress of both chronic pain and postoperative pain.

Listening to music can reduce chronic pain from a range of painful conditions, including osteoarthritis, disc problems and rheumatoid arthritis, by up to 21% and depression by up to 25%, according to a paper in the latest UK-based *Journal of Advanced Nursing*.

Music therapy is increasingly used in hospitals to reduce the need for medication during childbirth, to decrease postoperative pain, and to complement the use of anesthesia during surgery.

Reducing Blood Pressure

By playing recordings of relaxing music every morning and evening, people with high blood pressure can train themselves to lower their blood pressure and keep it low. According to research reported at the American Society of Hypertension meeting in New Orleans, listening to just 30 minutes of classical, Celtic, or raga music every day may significantly reduce high blood pressure.

Medicine for the Heart

Music is good for your heart. Research shows that it is musical tempo rather than style that produces this benefit. Italian and British researchers recruited young men and women, half of whom were trained musicians. The participants slipped on head phones and listened to six styles of music, including rap and classical pieces, with random two-minute pauses. As the participants kicked back and listened, the researchers monitored their breathing, heart rates, and blood pressure. The participants had faster heart and breathing rates when they listened to lively music. When the music slowed, so did their heart and breathing rates. Some results were surprising. During the musical pauses, heart and breathing rates normalized or reached more optimal levels. Whether or not a person liked the style of music did not matter. The tempo, or pace, of the music had the greatest effect on relaxation.

Music Boosts Immunity

Music can boost the immune function. Scientists explain that a particular type of music can create a positive and profound emotional experience, which leads to secretion of immune-boosting hormones. This helps contribute to a reduction in the factors responsible for illness. Listening to music or singing can also decrease levels of stress-related hormone cortisol. Higher levels of cortisol can lead to a decreased immune response.