

# Music May Heal Body . . . Soul

**Since ancient times, music has been used to heal.** And no wonder: Music can positively affect heart rate, breathing rate, blood pressure and anxiety levels.

It also may reduce pain during childbirth and after surgery. In one study, women in labor reported less pain while music was being played. The music also helped them focus on their breathing and relax.

Most research has focused on classical music. However, other relaxing music, such as jazz or easy-listening music, might be used instead. The key is to pick music with a soothing sound. Relaxing music typically has a tempo of about 60 beats per minute. This often includes music made by string instruments.

## UPBEAT TEMPO

To boost your mood, however, you may want to turn on an upbeat tune. Positive music can turn a gloomy day around, findings suggest. For best results, actively aim to improve your mood as you listen. Contrary to what you may think, trying to feel happier often works, especially when you do it with a sound track.

During exercise, music can distract you from fatigue. This is one of the reasons why many people who exercise to music tend to work out longer and more vigorously.

## MAKE YOUR OWN

Listening isn't the only way to benefit from your favorite melody. Learning to play music may improve spatial reasoning. Some research shows that piano lessons help children with their math lessons.

## Enjoy Your Music Safely

Whether you prefer country or classical, the Rolling Stones, or Katy Perry, the World Health Organization (WHO) advises limiting your listening through headphones to less than an hour a day.

Can't imagine 23 hours of your day without your personal playlist? Try these tactics in addition to cutting back, WHO advises:

- **Keep the volume on your phone or MP3 player** to no more than 60 percent of the maximum.
- **Use earphones that fit well.** Consider a pair with noise-canceling technology. Reducing background noise means you'll hear quieter music more clearly.
- **Wear earplugs in loud settings.** This includes nightclubs, concerts and sporting events. Also, move to a spot in the venue far from loudspeakers.