

# MUSIC THERAPY

## FAST FACTS

- The field of music therapy gained recognition following its use in VA hospitals after WWII to aid in the healing process.
- Brain scans seem to show that music and exercise are the only two activities that stimulate your entire brain.

### WHAT IS MUSIC THERAPY?

Music therapy is a well-recognized treatment that uses music in specific ways to help patients identify and deal with social, mental, emotional or physical concerns. Music therapy can play an important part in supporting cancer patients, with benefits before, during, and after treatment.

A music therapist will assess the needs of a patient by their response to hearing music or how they respond to questions after hearing it. The therapist uses this information to design a treatment program.

Music therapy is always tailored for your needs. It may include the therapist or patient playing a musical instrument or singing, the patient composing music, or either or both listening to, dancing, or moving to music.

Music therapy helps people express feelings or thoughts in a more complex, multi-dimensional way than just words. This can help in coping with trauma or disease, including cancer.

### WHAT CONDITIONS DOES MUSIC THERAPY TREAT?

Music therapy is used to help with a variety of physical and mental health conditions and address symptoms related to chronic health concerns, including:

- Alzheimer's
- Depression
- Hospital/procedural anxiety
- Autism/autism spectrum disorder
- Cancer
- Anxiety
- Physical therapy/rehabilitation
- Dementia
- Mood disorders
- Speech loss
- Neurological disorders
- Attention deficit disorder/Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- Chronic and acute pain relief
- Problems with cognitive function
- Learning disabilities

### How does music therapy help people with cancer?

Music therapy can help people with cancer by:

- Reducing anxiety and stress related to the diagnosis and procedures.
- Improving mood and helping with relaxation.
- Helping them develop coping skills and the ability to be resilient in the face of challenges.

### Is there evidence that music therapy works?

In the last 20 years, as patients increasingly integrate complementary and alternative medicine into their treatment plans, more and more literature is being published exploring and confirming the positive impact music therapy has on certain conditions. A sample includes:

- A systematic review of children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder who received music therapy as an adjunct treatment found that music therapy significantly improved skills related to social interaction, verbal communication, behavior initiation and reciprocating socially expressed emotional cues.<sup>1</sup>
- A systematic review of dementia patients who received music therapy found that the music therapy had a moderately large impact on reducing disruptive behaviors, anxiety levels and depressive moods, and improving cognitive functioning.<sup>2</sup>
- A randomized control trial of people suffering from obsessive compulsive disorder found that those who engaged in music therapy in addition to usual care experienced a reduction in their obsessions/obsessive behaviors as well as co-morbid anxiety and/or depression.<sup>3</sup>
- Palliative care patients who received music therapy experienced a significant reduction in pain.<sup>4</sup>



## References

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