



Music Therapy for Pain Management

HOW IS MUSIC THERAPY USED FOR PAIN MANAGEMENT?

Pain is a complex, subjective experience that involves not only sensory but also cognitive and psychosocial processes. Therefore, music therapy aims to address a multitude of factors that may exacerbate the pain experience or play a role in the transition from acute to chronic pain. Music therapy for pain management goes beyond listening to pre-recorded music to distract or relax, and includes individualized, active music engagement to optimize pain management (Allen, 2013; Bradt, 2013).

Music therapists work across populations and age groups to assist with pain management, from children during painful procedures to people at end-of-life care. Music therapists address acute, chronic as well as procedural pain. Contributing to the effective management of pain is a major responsibility of music therapists in medical settings. Untreated or inadequately treated pain significantly affects one's well-being and may have long-term impacts on mood, mental health, cognitive processes, sleep, physical functioning, and disability. It may also lead to mistrust towards the medical community.

BENEFITS OF MUSIC THERAPY

- ◆ Systematic reviews have demonstrated important pain-reducing effects of music therapy (e.g., Bradt et al., 2021; Klassen et al., 2008; Lee, 2016; McConnell et al., 2016, Yinger & Gooding, 2015). Most of the studies included in these systematic reviews addressed acute and procedural pain.
- ◆ Music therapy has also been found to improve chronic pain management outcomes such as pain interference, pain-related self-efficacy, and pain intensity (Bradt, 2015; Lee, 2016).
- ◆ Music therapy may reduce pain in people with cancer (Bradt et al., 2021) and in palliative care and hospice patients (Gallagher et al., 2017; Gutsell et al., 2013; McConnell et al., 2016).
- ◆ Music therapy may reduce pain in burn patients (Fratianne et al., 2001; Tan et al., 2010; Whitehead-Pleaux et al., 2009).
- ◆ Music interventions may reduce analgesic use, including opioid and non-opioid intake (Lee, 2016).
- ◆ Children as well as adults benefit from music interventions for pain although children appear to benefit more (Lee, 2016).

COMMON INTERVENTIONS

- Listening to live music
- Music-assisted relaxation
- Music-guided imagery
- Singing and chanting
- Vocal and instrumental improvisation
- Songwriting
- Music to refocus attention
- Instrument playing

COMMON GOALS

- Music therapy seeks to enhance pain management by addressing the following goals:
- Reduce pain intensity
 - Decrease pain interference
 - Improve pain-related self-efficacy
 - Divert attention away from the pain
 - Reduce stress and anxiety
 - Enhance mood
 - Increase perceived support
 - Support benefit-finding and sense-making related to illness
 - Provide procedural support
 - Promote a sense of control



CONTRAINDICATIONS

- ◆ Music-guided imagery is not indicated for people who are sedated or experience disorientation or confusion.
- ◆ Careful assessment is needed of the patient's readiness for and ability to tolerate certain music therapy interventions.
- ◆ Instrumental improvisation may not be appropriate in some hospital settings as the volume of the music may be harmful to others in the immediate environment

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What is AMTA?

The American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) represents 10,000 music therapists, corporate members, and related associations worldwide. AMTA is committed to the advancement of education, training, professional standards, and research in support of the music therapy profession. AMTA establishes criteria for the education and clinical training of music therapists. Professional members of AMTA adhere to a Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice in the delivery of music therapy services. AMTA's mission is to advance public knowledge of music therapy benefits and increase access to quality music therapy services. Learn more at www.musictherapy.org.