

Music therapy for depression may improve mood

Clinical question	How effective is music therapy for depression?
Bottom line	Compared with standard care, music therapy was accepted by people with depression and was associated with improvements in mood in 4 of the 5 studies reviewed.
Caveat	The small number and low methodological quality of the studies mean that it is not possible to be confident about the effectiveness of music therapy. Marked variations in the interventions offered, the populations studied and the outcome measures used meant that quantitative data synthesis and meta-analysis was not appropriate.
Context	Music therapy has been used in a variety of ways to treat depression. Active techniques may be used when participants cannot articulate difficult feelings, enabling therapist and patient to connect in an improvised dialogue, which can then act as a springboard to emotional awareness. Receptive techniques involve the use of pre-composed music for relaxation, reflection, guided reminiscence and change of mood state.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Maratos AS et al. Music therapy for depression. Cochrane Reviews 2008, Issue 1. Art No : CD004517. DOI : 10.1002/14651858. CD004517.pub2. This review contains 5 trials involving 237 participants.
Pearls No. 67, May 2008, written by Brian R McAvoy	

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