

Reduces Maternal Stress in Preterm Infants *via* Music Therapy

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Description

The birth of a premature baby can be a challenging time for parents. The experience can be overwhelming, as the baby may need to stay in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) for weeks or even months before being discharged. During this time, parents may experience heightened levels of stress and anxiety, which can negatively affect their emotional wellbeing and the development of their baby. Fortunately, research has shown that music therapy can be an effective tool in reducing maternal stress in preterm infants [1,2].

Music therapy is a therapeutic technique that involves using music to help individuals achieve therapeutic goals, such as reducing stress or anxiety. In the context of preterm infants, music therapy typically involves playing soothing music for the infant and/or the parent(s) in the NICU. The music can be played through headphones or speakers, and can be chosen based on the individual preferences of the infant and/or parent. Numerous studies have investigated the effects of music therapy on maternal stress in preterm infants, with generally positive results. For example, a study published in the *Journal of Music Therapy* found that music therapy significantly reduced stress and anxiety levels in mothers of preterm infants. The study involved 20 mothers of preterm infants who received either music therapy or standard care. The mothers in the music therapy group listened to live music played by a certified music therapist, while those in the standard care group received no additional interventions. The results showed that mothers in the music therapy group had significantly lower levels of stress and anxiety than those in the standard care group.

Published in the *Journal of Obstetric, Gynaecologic and Neonatal Nursing*, investigated the effects of music therapy on maternal stress, anxiety, and depression in mothers of preterm infants. The study involved 62 mothers who were randomly assigned to either a music therapy group or a control group. The mothers in the music therapy group received three 20-minute music therapy sessions per week, while those in the control group received standard care. The results showed that mothers in the music therapy group had significantly lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression than those in the control group. Published in the *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, also found that music therapy can be effective in reducing maternal stress in preterm infants. The review found that music therapy was associated with lower levels of maternal anxiety and depressive symptoms, as well as improved mother-infant bonding [3-5].

So, how does music therapy reduce maternal stress in preterm infants?

There are a few possible mechanisms at play. First, music therapy may help to promote relaxation and reduce feelings of anxiety and stress. This is because music has been shown to have a calming effect on the body and mind, slowing heart rate and breathing and reducing muscle tension. Second, music therapy may promote mother-infant bonding by creating a soothing and comforting environment for the infant. This can help to facilitate positive interactions between the mother and infant, which can in turn reduce maternal stress and anxiety. Finally, music therapy may provide a distraction from the stress and anxiety associated with the NICU environment. By focusing on the music, mothers may be able to temporarily forget about their worries and concerns, allowing them to relax and experience positive emotions. It is worth noting that while music therapy has been shown to be effective in reducing maternal stress in preterm infants, it is not a substitute for other forms of support and care. Parents of preterm infants may benefit from a range of interventions, including counselling, education, and social support. However, music therapy can be a valuable adjunctive therapy that can help to reduce stress and anxiety and promote positive emotional wellbeing for both parents and infants.

Acknowledgement

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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