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**Doctor, I have chronic pain, should I listen to music?**

Listening to music for 20-30 minutes per day can help to reduce pain, anxiety, and depression for people with chronic pain. It doesn’t matter what kind of music you listen to or what kind of pain you have. It might work better if you choose the music yourself rather than someone else choosing for you.

**What is the evidence?**

Researchers looked at patients who listened to music and compared them to patients who didn’t listen to music. They measured patients’ pain, depression, and anxiety. They found that:

* **Patients who listened to music had lower pain scores/less pain than patients who didn’t listen to music.**
* **Patients who listened to music also had lower scores for anxiety and depression than patients who didn’t listen to music.**
* **Patients who chose the music themselves had lower pain scores/less pain than patients who had the music chosen for them.**

**What kind of study was this?**

This was a systematic review. A systematic review summarises all available studies on a health care intervention to provide high quality evidence on the effectiveness of that health care intervention.

**Who participated in the study?** This review included fourteen studies (randomized trials) involving 1178 people who had chronic pain of any kind (both cancer and non-cancer) lasting for more than 3 months.

**How was the study done?** The reviewers chose studies that compared music with usual care (or patients who were not asked to listen to music).

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| **Intervention: Listening to Music** | **vs** | **Comparison: No music** |
| Most patients listened to recorded tapes. In two studies it was live music. In one study the music intervention was singing in a choir.  The timing of the music was any time during the day, including when patients felt their pain was higher than usual. |  | In most studies (12/14) the intervention was “no music”, so patients received the care they would normally receive, with no music added.  In one study, they compared music to “conversation”, and in another, to “tactile touch”. |

Why was this research done?

There have been some studies suggesting that music can be used to help manage chronic pain. Music is not expensive, not invasive, and most people have access to it. The researchers wanted to find out whether music can really be helpful for managing chronic pain.

**Citation**

*Garza-Villarreal, EA, Pando, V, Vuust, P, and Parsons, C. Music-induced analgesia in chronic pain conditions: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Pain Physician 2017; 20:597-610.*