Can Certain Music and Sounds Reduce Your Symptoms?

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Sound Therapy for Migraine

A growing body of researchers and alternative medicine specialists are turning their attention to sound as medicine. Sound therapy has been shown to impact learning capacity, insomnia, fatigue, and even physiological processes like blood pressure and back pain. For migraine sufferers, sound therapy could help you lower or eliminate the medication you use to control the intolerable headaches.

While the healing power of good music and soothing sound is no secret, it's also not exploited as often as it should be. A visit to a sound therapist is a good place to start, but you can also learn to use sound throughout your daily routine to reduce your pain quickly.

How Sound Can Diminish your Pain

Notice how your troubles seem to melt away when you listen to your favorite song? Well, there's a biochemical explanation for that. Sound has a huge impact on the physical state of your brain: scans show that certain sounds and types of music can trigger centers and processes in the brain usually involved in happy, calm, and pain-free states.

Change in Frequency

Enjoyable music and more subtle harmonizing vibrations can effectively take your brainwaves from the active beta state to the deeper, relaxed states known as alpha, theta, and delta. Once you've entered into these deeper mental states, your body will relax and cells begin to regenerate.

Increase in Neurotransmitters

When you listen to music that lightens your mood and relaxes your mind, your levels of dopamine will begin to rise. Since this neurotransmitter is responsible for regulating pain and increasing euphoric feelings (almost like an opiate), it's no wonder that you can find relief in a really good song.

Types of Sound Therapy

It is believed that sound can bring together powerful physical and emotional processes for release and healing. Of course, sound is very subjective; everyone processes sound in their own way, and music to the ears of your friend may be grating and unnerving for you. Sound therapy makes use of several types of sound, so there's a good chance that at least one method will work for you.

- **White noise**. When all the audible frequencies are combined, you get white noise — a homogenous, static effect that can work wonders on focus and sleep problems. If you have a migraine, white noise can mask loud sounds that make the pain worse, and it can help you get to sleep faster (and sleep is one of the best

known natural ways to overcome a migraine).
- **Binaural tones**. Many alternative health experts believe that sending a different tone (frequency) into each ear at the same time can affect the brainwaves in positive ways. The effect for the listener is a low pulse (or beat) in the brain, and that binaural beat can actually train the brain to follow a more relaxing and less pain-sensitive frequency.

Next page: two more types of sound therapy, and some sound apps to try.

Types of Sound Therapy

- **Chanting and drums**. Ceremonies that mesh spiritual focus with physical meditation often use rhythmic drums, chants, or singing bowls. These tools are soothing, and can create a trance-like state of relaxation. The release of tension can physically diminish your migraine pain, and the trance is pleasantly distracting.
- **Chimes and music**. Not surprisingly, peaceful and cheerful music is often used in sound therapy to gently release tension and inspire more positive thoughts.

Music is a personal experience, and you may not find relief in the same slow and lilting tunes as other people. For instance, energizing music could be more helpful to fight off an impending migraine, or to get through the worst of the pain. The key is to experiment with music you like — the more you genuinely enjoy a song or playlist, the better it will work for you.

Put Your Technology to Use

You have more audio tools at your disposal than you may think. Visit YouTube for a selection of videos that make choose tones specifically for their headache-fighting power, often pairing them with soothing images and colors.

There are also some helpful migraine apps out there. Whether or not you rely on your phone to help you track your triggers, consider downloading one of these apps that use sound in different ways so you can get relief whenever and wherever you need it.

- **Relax Melodies**: It's marketed as a helpful bedtime app, but Relax Melodies can provide perfectly soothing sounds whenever you need them. You can choose from a variety of conventionally relaxing sounds — nature noises, deep chants, ocean sounds, and white noise are all at your disposal — to create a playlist, or else mix sounds together for a unique medley of your own.
- **Brainwave Tuner**: A bit more in-depth than a series of soothing sounds, Brainwave Tuner generates specific tones that actually change your brainwaves (and your mood and feelings along with them). Depending on what effect you're after, you can modify the tones for better focus, relaxation, or even to diminish your headache.

- **Binaural Beats**: By making changes to your brain frequency, the Binaural Beats app can help relieve stress, strain, and tension that is likely contributing to your migraine pain. Another appealing feature is the active user community, where fans of the app can provide feedback and upload their own sounds and graphics to enhance the experience.

There haven't been many studies to support the usefulness of sound in pain management, but as you likely know all too well, migraines can make you very sensitive to sound in very painful ways. If sound can have such a negative impact on your pain, it is well worth investigating what sort of positive impact it may have.