

Even During Heightened Stress of a Pandemic, Listening to Music Was Effective in Managing Mental Health, Research Finds

New study suggests music is an easily accessible means of managing stress and mood, even for individuals with higher levels of stress.

WASHINGTON, DC, US , January 25, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A new study has for the first time provided real-time and real-life evidence that [listening to music](#) during psychologically demanding times – in this case, during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 – was a simple and effective means of reducing stress and improving mood, particularly for those with elevated, chronic stress.

Researchers conducted a study of 771 adults from the general population in Austria and Italy during the lockdowns in April and May 2020. The study participants reported their music listening and stress and mood levels five times a day using a smartphone app.

The results, reported in JAMA Network Open, indicate that listening to music was effective in lowering stress and improving mood, with happy music particularly effective. Contrary to the researchers' expectations, individuals with chronic stress experienced the most benefit from listening to music.

"Listening to music was significantly associated with lower levels of stress," wrote lead author Anja C. Feneberg, PhD, of the Faculty of Psychology at the University of Vienna. "Moreover, music listening was significantly associated with improved mood, particularly for those with



Listening to music was effective in lowering stress and improving mood, researchers found, with happy music particularly effective and with the most benefit experienced by individuals with chronic stress.

elevated chronic stress during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

More broadly, Feneberg suggests that listening to music could be considered as a [remedy for stress](#) brought on during any psychologically demanding time in the future. “Because music is highly popular across cultures and age groups and readily available at almost no cost, music listening can be considered a low-threshold intervention to improve health and well-being on the population level during times of crisis,” she wrote.

Listening to music joins other non-drug approaches to maintaining or restoring good mental health that recent research has found effective.

A 2022 study found physical activity is associated with significantly reduced depression symptoms in children and adolescents, especially in teenagers and in youth who are more severely depressed. [1]

Exercise has also been found to be preventive. A 2021 study found that adults who are physically active lower their risk of depression and that even relatively small doses of physical activity were associated with substantially lower risks of depression. [2] Online health guidance from Harvard Medical School calls exercise “an all-natural treatment to fight depression” that is also “an effective treatment.” [3]

Other recent research has highlighted the importance of nutrition in preventing and treating depression. Eating a healthy, Mediterranean-style diet, with higher levels of vegetables, fruit, fish, whole grains, olive oil, nuts and legumes, resulted in a substantial improvement of depression symptoms in young adult males, even for those with severe depression symptoms, according to a 2022 study. One-third (36%) of study participants experienced a full remission of their depression. [4]



Exercise is an all-natural treatment to fight depression, and even relatively small doses of physical activity can substantially lower the risk of becoming depressed.



Research has found that confiding in others and visiting with family and friends were top ways to lower the risk of depression.

The quality of a diet can also increase or decrease the odds of developing depression in the first place. Diets rich in plant foods and lean proteins have been linked to a lower risk of depression, while diets with more processed and sugary foods are associated with a higher risk of depression, according to another recent study. [5]

Folic acid, also known as vitamin B9, was linked in a recent study to a substantial (44%) reduction in suicide attempts and intentional self-harm in adults. Unlike antidepressants, whose side effects include sleep problems, emotional dulling, sexual dysfunction, and the impulsiveness and mania that

can lead to violence and suicidal thoughts and action, folic acid has “no real side effects, it doesn’t cost a lot of money, [and] you can get it without a prescription,” according to the 2022 study, which concludes, “this could potentially save tens of thousands of lives.” [6]

Looking for lifestyle, social, and environmental factors that could be modified to reduce the risk of becoming depressed, a 2020 study found that confiding in others was the factor most associated with reduced odds of depression, even for individuals deemed at-risk for depression due to earlier trauma they experienced. Visiting with family and friends, various forms of vigorous exercise, and getting enough sleep were other top factors associated with a lowered risk of depression. [7]

These studies indicate that relatively easy lifestyle changes may be very effective prevention and non-drug treatment for stress and depression. Other possible physical causes can also be explored.

The Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) recommends a complete physical examination with lab tests, nutritional and allergy screenings, and a review of all current medications to identify any physical causes of depression, anxiety or other unwanted mental and emotional symptoms that might otherwise be misdiagnosed as a psychiatric disorder and incorrectly treated.

CCHR continues to raise public awareness of the risks of serious side effects and withdrawal symptoms from antidepressants and other psychiatric drugs, so that consumers and their



physicians can make fully informed decisions about starting or stopping the drugs. CCHR supports safe and science-based non-drug approaches to mental health.

WARNING: Anyone wishing to discontinue or change the dose of a psychiatric drug is cautioned to do so only under the supervision of a physician because of potentially dangerous withdrawal symptoms.

The Citizens Commission on Human Rights was co-founded in 1969 by members of the Church of Scientology and the late psychiatrist and humanitarian Thomas Szasz, M.D., recognized by many academics as modern psychiatry's most authoritative critic, to eradicate abuses and restore human rights and dignity to the field of mental health. CCHR has been instrumental in obtaining 228 laws against psychiatric abuses and violations of human rights worldwide.

The CCHR National Affairs Office in Washington, DC, has advocated for mental health rights and protections at the state and federal level. The CCHR traveling exhibit, which has toured 441 major cities worldwide and educated over 800,000 people on the history to the present day of abusive and racist psychiatric practices, has been displayed at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Annual Legislative Conference in Washington, DC, and at other locations.

- [1] <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32059797/>
- [2] <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2790780>
- [3] <https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/exercise-is-an-all-natural-treatment-to-fight-depression>
- [4] <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/983358>
- [5] <https://bmcmmedicine.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12916-017-0791-y>
- [6] <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36169979>
- [7] <https://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/doi/epdf/10.1176/appi.ajp.2020.19111158>

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