

Music Can Soothe the Heart

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By Miranda Hitti



"Take two tunes and call me in the morning" isn't usual advice from heart doctors, but maybe it should be.

Luciano Bernardi, MD, and colleagues aren't suggesting music as a substitute for a healthy lifestyle and heart medicines. However, music could enhance heart health, they note.

Learning to play music may help even more. Musicians showed more heart sensitivity to music in Bernardi's study, which appears in *Heart's* advance online edition.

Bernardi works at Italy's University of Pavia.

Music has also gotten attention from scientists. It's shown to cut stress, upgrade athletic performance, improve movement in nerve-damaged patients, and boost milk production in cattle, write Bernardi and colleagues.

Tune Test

Bernardi's study was small. It included 24 healthy people in their early to mid-20s; half were accomplished musicians.

Participants lay down and rested quietly for 20 minutes. Then they donned headsets and listened to a random selection of music.

Meanwhile, researchers monitored their heart rates, breathing, blood pressure, and other vital signs (including during the rest period).

During pauses between music types, heart rates, breathing, and blood pressure improved beyond that seen before the participants listened to any music.

Researchers say this suggests that any type of music — fast or slow — may have beneficial effects on the heart.

Musicians' Advantage

The musicians in the study were more sensitive to musical tempo.

That may be because they've learned to breathe in time with the music or to concentrate harder during fast rhythms and relax during lulls or slower passages, the researchers write.

Since the participants were all young and healthy, more research probably awaits. But the findings may be food for thought as you scroll through your musical collection.

By Miranda Hitti, reviewed by Michael W. Smith, MD