

How music impacts our quality of life

Although there is not one best intervention, magical song, or perfect genre to make all the hard things in life easier, there are times where music can have a clear and immediate impact on our well-being, according to health.harvard.edu.

Recently, researchers looked at the impact of music interventions on health-related quality of life and discovered that the use of music interventions such as listening to music, singing, and music therapy can create significant improvements in mental health. However, researchers found no one best intervention or “dose” of music that works best for all people.

Music is said to enhance intelligence and focus, improve mental health, and boost the immune system as well as self-esteem and confidence. It can be used to relax, to boost and lift our mood, or to improve concentration. Music can also be used to aid in insomnia, helping to encourage and induce a deeper sleep. Many people have expressed how music is a form of ‘escape’ and can quickly and effectively transport them to a better time, place, or memory.

Here are six benefits that music therapy can have on your mental health:

1. Improve focus on work or study:

There have been numerous studies proving that listening to classical music helps the mind to focus. Music with a tempo of 60 bpm (beats per



minute) increases the brain’s ability to process information. There have also been studies suggesting that EDM (electronic dance music) helps sharpen focus while studying.

2. As a form of expression: Music is a wonderful way of expressing emotion and creativity without having to say anything. Whether it’s playing a playlist of your favourite songs with friends or strumming your guitar, music is the perfect non-verbal way of expressing emotions that are too complex to talk about.

3. To lift the mood: Playing uplifting songs has a profound effect on the brain, stimulating it to increase feel-good hormones which boost our mood.

4. To boost confidence: Subliminal and ambient music such as binaural beat music is proven to assist in anxiety and low confidence. Using alpha waves from 8-14 Hz help the mind get into a more sharpened and confident state of mind. Listening to binaural beat and isochronic tone music is ideal when you’re feeling nervous or fearful. It is believed that the brain syncs to the new frequency introduced by the binaural beat, altering your ‘brain state’ to a more happy, confident sense of being.

5. To relax: Meditative music has a cathartic effect on us, improving our mood and inducing relaxation of both the body and mind. Research has shown the calming sounds of piano, nature, and string-instruments are very effective in helping you to relax.

6. To express anger or negative emotion: Music is an incredible vehicle to help us process negative emotion. Listening to ‘angry’ music can be therapeutic when we’re dealing with stress and anger.

Music therapy is a technique administered by health care professionals to help support people as they strive to improve and gain control over their mental health, functioning, and well-being. It is an established health care profession that uses evidence-based music interventions to address therapeutic health care goals.

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Try these super brain boosters

(NC) When seasons change, so do our bodies and many of us need a boost during the fall. Here are some vitamins and supplements for your brain and body.

Omega-3 fatty acid. Acids like ALA, EPA and DHA play an important role in the human body, with some studies showing a link between the latter two and positive effects on slowing cognitive decline, such as memory and thinking skills, in older adults.

But since the body doesn't produce them on their own, we have to get omega-3s through diet or supplementation. Fatty fish like salmon and tuna are good sources of EPA and DHA, but most people do not get the recommended amount of omega-3s in their daily diet. If you don't, fish oil supplements can help.

Vitamin B12. This essential vitamin helps make DNA and red blood cells. But it's another one you need to get through the foods you eat. Foods that are rich in vitamin B12 include eggs, milk, meat, poultry and seafood. While

most of us get enough from our diets, 10 to 30 percent of older adults may not absorb vitamin B12 properly. If you don't receive enough from food sources or are over 50, you can get vitamin B12 in a multivitamin or foods that are fortified with vitamin B12.

Melatonin. Getting adequate sleep is important, as it affects almost every type of tissue and system in the body – from the brain, heart and lungs to metabolism, mood and disease resistance. Studies have shown that melatonin supplements can help reduce the effects of jet lag and re-set the body's sleep-wake cycle. Melatonin can also increase total sleep time in people suffering from altered sleep schedules, such as shift workers, and reduce the time it takes people with sleep disorders to fall asleep.

While melatonin can be helpful in regulating sleep patterns, it is not recommended for use longer than four weeks. The dosage is different in adults and children; consult with your healthcare practitioner about what dose is right for you and your family members.

Supplements that may help with anxiety

Anxiety is a common mental health condition. Research tells us that more than 33% of people will experience an anxiety disorder during their lifetime

Anxiety disorders include generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), panic disorder with or without agoraphobia, social anxiety disorder (SAD), specific phobias, and separation anxiety disorder. Treatment often involves psychological therapies, such as cognitive behavior therapy or medication.

One way you can help yourself overcome mild anxiety could be to change up your diet including taking certain vitamins, minerals, and other supplements.

Healthline.com offers the following suggestions, keeping in mind that before trying any new supplements for anxiety, it's important to ask your healthcare professional about potential medication interactions or safety concerns.

And remember, while supplements may be used to help manage anxiety, they do not provide a cure. Therefore, when selecting supplements, be wary of products that claim to treat or cure anxiety disorders.

- **Magnesium Glycinate** - Magnesium is an essential mineral that plays an important role in the body's stress response. Additionally, research suggests that magnesium supplements may be beneficial for people with anxiety and are generally safe and well tolerated.

- **Vitamin D-3** - Many people are deficient in or have suboptimal levels of vitamin D, a fat-soluble nutrient that's essential for brain function and mood regulation.

Studies show that vitamin D inadequacy or deficiency is particularly common in people with mental health conditions, including anxiety disorders.

- **Chamomile** - Chamomile is an herb known for its calming properties. While it's more commonly consumed as a tea, chamomile supplements may provide benefits for people with anxiety.

- **Vitamin C** - Vitamin C is a nutrient that functions as a powerful antioxidant in the body, and researchers suggest that vitamin C may help combat damage caused by oxidative stress in people with neuropsychological disorders, including anxiety.



Publisher & CEO: Stefan Dreesen

Editor: Kate Van Hoof-Peeren

H&S Communication Specialists:

Alan Haycroft, Liz Slobodin,
Kevin Harvey

TOLL FREE: 1-888-655-4800

Mailing Address: 2010 Winston Park Drive, Suite 200,
Oakville, ON L6H 5R7

www.smartworkplace.ca | info@smartworkplace.ca

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Understanding rheumatoid arthritis flares

If you or someone you know is dealing with rheumatoid arthritis (RA), you can understand the debilitation this disease causes when it flares up. RA is a disease of ups and downs. One day, your joints feel pretty good. The next, swelling and pain ratchet up and you can barely get out of bed. These symptom episodes — called flares — can be unpredictable and debilitating. Because symptoms differ from person to person, doctors have had trouble agreeing on a standard definition to guide them in treating flares. New RA research hopes to develop tools to help doctors and patients bridge these gaps in understanding.

According to arthritis.org, flares come in two varieties:

Predictable flares have a known trigger.

For example, you overdo it at the gym or at work and end up with swollen, stiff joints the next day. With a predictable flare you'll temporarily feel worse, but your symptoms will resolve in time.

Unpredictable flares have more uncertainty associated with them. These flares cause you to feel worse, but did not have a trigger that was causing symptoms to get worse. These flares might not get better on their own.

When self-care measures like rest and anti-inflammatory medicines aren't enough, your symptoms could ultimately drive you to see your doctor. Repeated or consistent flares may need a medication adjustment

or other change in treatment to help you find relief.

Unfortunately, flares have no consideration for your obligations at home or at work. They can strike any time, so it is equally important to have a plan in place at home. Have a few sick days saved up in case you need to use them. Or see if you can make adjustments to your schedule to work reduced or alternate hours. Make sure family members know which responsibilities to take over so you can have a break.

Here are a few more tips:

Watch the signs. Pay attention to early warning signs, such as a dull ache in your hands or daytime sleepiness that lasts for days. A key part of managing the flare is tackling it as early as possible.

Take some rest. The best thing you can do for your arthritis is to keep moving. However, when you are experiencing a flare, sometimes the best thing you can do for your arthritis is rest and allow your body to recharge. Finding balance between activity and rest is especially important during a flare.

Be kind to yourself. Allowing anxiety and stress to build can worsen inflammation and lead to depression, which is also linked to inflammation. Find outlets for ongoing stress relief and get professional help when your emotions get too overwhelming to manage on your own.

How do bacteria become resistant to drugs?

(NC) Some of us have heard warnings from scientists and medical professionals about “antimicrobial resistance,” which is when microbes adapt to resist, or even ignore, medications we rely on for health care. Many people know antimicrobial resistance is a real threat, but not how it happens.

How do microbes like bacteria, fungi, parasites and viruses grow to become resistant?

Bacteria, a type of microbe, are single-celled life forms and reproduce by dividing themselves. In theory, each time a bacterium splits, that should result in two exact copies of the original, but that doesn't always happen.

With every split, there's a tiny chance that a copy will be a little different than its parent. A lot of the time, the change has no effect, or makes life harder for the copy. But sometimes, the change makes the copy more likely to survive, and pass the adaptation along to its descendants. This is how new strains and variants of microorganisms form.

If we use antibiotics to treat a bacterial infection and some of the bacteria survive thanks to an adaptation, they'll multiply and pass that resistance down. The next time we try the same treatment, it will kill even fewer of the bacteria than before, since surviving bacteria passed on their adaptation. The same thing can happen with viruses, fungi and parasites and the drugs we use to treat them.

Drug resistance can happen any time we treat bacterial or other microbial infections, but it's more likely if the treatment isn't carried out properly. That's why you should always take antibiotics as prescribed.

Preventing drug resistance is just as important for animals as it is for people too. Use of antibiotics for pets and other animals can also lead to resistant bacteria.

Risks posed by drug-resistant microorganisms may be great, but there are ways we can help stop them before they develop.



Mammograms and self-exams help in the fight against breast cancer

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among Canadian women (excluding non-melanoma skin cancers). It is the second leading cause of death from cancer in Canadian women. According to cancer.ca, 28,600 Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. This represents 25% of all new cancer cases in women in 2022.

Breast cancer may not cause any signs or symptoms in its early stages. Signs and symptoms often appear when the tumour grows large enough to be felt as a lump in the breast or when the cancer spreads to surrounding tissues and organs. Other health conditions can cause the same symptoms as breast cancer.

The most common symptom is a firm or hard lump that feels very different from the rest of the breast. It may feel like it is attached to the skin or the surrounding breast tissue. The lump doesn't get smaller or come and go with your period. It may be tender, but it's usually not painful. (Pain is more often a symptom of a non-cancerous condition).

Other symptoms include:

- A lump in the armpit.
- Changes in the shape or size of the breast.
- Changes to the nipple, such as a nipple that suddenly starts to point inward (called an inverted nipple).
- Discharge that comes out of the nipple without squeezing it or that has blood in it.

A mammogram can help find and diagnose breast cancer. The decision to have a mammogram or use any other screening method may be a difficult decision for some women. While screening for breast cancer is often recommended, it is not mandatory. Speak with your health care provider for information regarding how to get screened, the facts and myths about screening tests, how to maintain your breast health, and to get help making an informed decision.

You can also perform a breast self-examination. This involves checking your breasts for lumps or changes. Ask your doctor for tips that can help you do it correctly.

Also keep in mind that the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care does not recommend self-examination for women ages 40-74 who do not have a higher risk of breast cancer as this may lead to unneeded tests such as biopsies. If you notice something unusual, talk with health care professional about it.

A smile is worth more than you think

When you're smiling, does the whole world smile with you? Apparently, it is!

Smiles are incredibly simple, but they carry a lot of meaning. Since smiles are so intriguing, they have been studied by science to figure out how and why they have such a huge impact on people. When it comes to the science of a smile, not only does it express your happiness, but it can make you and others happy as well.

There is a lot to the science of smiling. The muscles involved in smiling are controlled by different parts of the brain than those used for frowning or other negative facial expressions. This allows us to have greater control over our smiles than any other facial expression, which makes them unique and more powerful than any other form of communication.

When we smile, it makes us feel good and triggers positive thoughts about ourselves and others around us. It signals to your brain that you are happy, which encourages it to release hormones, including endorphins, serotonin, and dopamine, that increase your good feelings.

With these feel-good hormones running through your body, there is a feedback loop of good vibes that can either make you happy or make you smile, meaning you smile because you feel good, and when you feel good, you smile more. Smiles are so powerful, just seeing another person smile can cause your brain to release

your feel-good hormones. This then causes you to smile too! When that happens, more hormones are released, and you get a boost to your mood because of it.

A genuine smile shared with another person can make someone else smile, feel better about themselves, and feel better about their situation — even if it's just for a moment. Smiling also affects how others see us, because people will typically associate smiling with positive emotions like happiness or contentment.

Science has also shown that even if you smile when you are aren't feeling particularly happy at that moment, it can cause your brain to release the feel-good hormones that will circulate throughout your entire body. It won't take long before you are feeling truly happier and have a genuine smile on your face. According to a study published in *Nature Human Behaviour* when people's facial muscles come together to create a smile, even if they're not thinking about smiling, something happens through the body-mind connection that results in the sensation of happiness. The effect isn't strong enough to overcome something intense like depression, but it provides useful insight into what emotions are and where they come from.

So, give smiling a try! It can't hurt and you might find yourself in a better mood because of it.



Physical activity will make you feel better

If you're like most people, squeezing a bit more physical activity into your day wouldn't hurt. Regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health. Being physically active can improve your brain health, help manage weight, reduce the risk of disease, strengthen bones and muscles, and improve your ability to do everyday activities.

Adults who sit less and do any amount of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity gain some health benefits. Only a few lifestyle choices have as large an impact on your health as physical activity. Everyone can experience the health benefits of physical activity – age, abilities, ethnicity, shape, or size do not matter.

Here are some tips:

Take a lunch break: Take some time to step away from your desk and use your lunch time for a workout. Go for your favourite type of exercise or try something new. Check out local gyms and fitness centres near your office or start with something simple like taking a nice, long walk during lunchtime.

Get moving at work: Research shows that both the people and the workplace itself benefit when employees are encouraged to be active. Positive effects of physical activity include higher productivity, lower absenteeism and turnover,

reduced stress and a happier workplace culture. Work with management or human resources to find creative ways of encouraging movement. For example, bring in an instructor to lead lunchtime exercise classes.

Stretch and flex: Active living isn't just about strength training and cardio – it's important to have a mix of activities in your routine. Flexibility routines are great for your body, helping you maintain your ability to bend and stretch easily, which can get harder as we age. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety recommends breaking for five to 10 minutes for every hour you spend at a work station. Do some stretches, get up and walk over to a coworker's space rather than communicate via phone or email, and start and end your workday with a short set of stretches.

Use the buddy system: It is sometimes hard to stick to your goal of incorporating more activity into your work day, but if you find someone willing to share the challenge it can make it easier and more enjoyable. A coworker might have a similar schedule, or if a friend or relative lives or works nearby, they can also be a great exercise partner. Go on walks together or sign up for a lunch class and make the commitment to show up for each other.

Olive oil myths and facts

Olive oil is used in daily cooking across the country and for good reason. Olive oil is a versatile oil that can be delicious on its own or in a number of recipes. Choosing the right olive oil is often where we face a challenge. The numerous brands of olive oil out on the market bring with it confusion on which varieties are best to choose.

Here are several myths and facts about olive oil according to fitday.com

MYTH: All olive oil brands are the same.

It is easy to assume the quality of olive oil wouldn't vary much brand to brand, but this is a large concern when purchasing olive oil. Unfortunately, some oils labeled 100% olive oil may actually contain other oils that are less expensive to help cut cost. Products that are represented or sold as olive oil or pure olive oil in Canada are subject to the standard of composition for this product, which states in part, that olive oil shall be obtained from the fruit of the olive tree.

When designated as "extra virgin" or "virgin" olive oil, strict requirements must be met. Be sure to research the brand and company that you purchase the olive oil from to ensure its quality.

FACT: The colour of the bottle will make the olive oil last longer.

Another key way to help your olive oil last longer is by choosing a olive oil that comes in a dark glass bottle. Avoid clear glass or plastic bottles. Storing the olive oil in a dark glass bottle helps minimize the oil's exposure to light and helps keep it fresh longer. Olive oil should also be stored in a dark area to limit light exposure as well.

FACT: Olive oil should not be used in high heat cooking.

When it comes to using olive oil, it is recommended to be used primarily for cold salads and low to medium heat cooking. Extra virgin olive oil has a smoke point at 410 degrees, the temperature at which the oil can denature and possibly develop toxic compounds.

MYTH: Olive oil is a healthy fat, so feel free to consume as much as you want.

Olive oil is classified as an unsaturated fat and is popular choice since it can improve blood cholesterol levels and reduce inflammation. Its chemical composition categorizes olive oil as a fat and weighs in at 9 calories per gram, much more than carbohydrates and protein. One tablespoon of olive oil is roughly 120 calories so whether it be adding into a salad or drizzling it onto meats, be sure to account for the portion size.

Signs your body is telling you to slow down

(NC) Rushing from point A to point B with barely any time to breathe? When the day is filled with endless tasks, it can be easy to ignore the signs your body is telling you to slow down. Here are three indicators that you need to take a pause:

Lack of sleep

Whether you have insomnia or interrupted sleep, a lack of sleep is a telltale sign it's time for change. Sleep is incredibly important for overall health. Having proper routines can help. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, avoid electronics before bed and sleep in a dark, cool place. Try breathing techniques and meditations to help send you off to sleep.

You're always sick

Everyone catches a cold or a fever occasionally, but if you find yourself

under the weather repeatedly, it may be time to reset. Sometimes it's as simple as readjusting lifestyle habits such as eating more nutrient-dense foods, drinking more water and taking breaks to prevent burnout and chronic stress. If these don't help, don't be afraid to consult with a medical professional to see if you have any underlying immunity issues.

You feel sore, achy or clumsy

Are you frequently dropping things here and there, bumping into things, tripping over, spilling or breaking things? That's a clear and strong indicator that you're moving too fast. It's a major physical sign, wherein your body is asking you to slow down as tension is building up.

energy zone

Modern science confirms that pumpkin seeds have an impressive nutrient profile that benefits many aspects of your health. They're a rich source of protein, unsaturated fatty acids, vitamins, and minerals that reduce risk factors of chronic diseases, including cancer.

You can buy pumpkin seeds raw, spouted, or roasted at most grocery stores and specialty health food retailers. When sold in their green shells, they're also sometimes called pepitas.

Pumpkin seeds are rich in many antioxidants, which protect our cells from disease-causing damage and reduce

Pumpkin Seeds!

inflammation in our bodies. They're also a great source of dietary fibre, which can enhance this effect. Pumpkin seeds' anti-inflammatory abilities can help maintain good function in the liver, bladder, bowel, and joints.



Constipation feels different for everyone

(NC) Did you know that two-in-three Canadians have confessed to having experienced occasional constipation? With most of the population facing this issue, it's time to break the poo taboo. **Here are five things you might have not known:**

1) Constipation feels different for everyone

Constipation is the infrequent passage of stools (less than three a week) that are difficult and can be painful to pass. However, everyone can experience different symptoms, which can include feeling bloated, strained bowel movements, abdominal pain and gas.

2) S is for success

According to the Bristol Stool Chart, there are a total of seven types of poos that range from hard lumps to liquid consistency, each one giving clues to what might be happening. Think S for a healthy stool: a soft and smooth form.

3) It can happen to anyone – it's not just for seniors

Although typically associated with aging, according to a new survey, occasional constipation is experienced often by young adults. It's reported that nearly three out of four Canadians aged 18 to 34 experience it. It's not uncommon, even with a healthy diet.

4) It happens the most when we travel

Nearly four in 10 Canadians have experienced occasional constipation during vacation. Reasons for this can vary, from sitting in transit for long periods of time, to eating more than usual, to the change in routine.

5) It doesn't have to ruin your plans

In the event of occasional constipation, there are over-the-counter, natural laxatives that can provide gentle overnight relief. With occasional constipation being something most of us experience, it doesn't need to be a taboo topic. Additional natural ways to support bowel regularity include eating prunes or foods with prebiotics or probiotics such as fermented dairy products like kefir or yogurt.