

What can a Parent do?

- Meet with the Music Therapist to discuss what would be appropriate for your child
- Participate in music therapy sessions with your child
- Learn music therapy methods that you can do with your child
- Sing, so your child can recognize your voice and bond with you
- Have a “go-to-song” that you frequently sing and that your child can learn to recognize. This song can then be used to soothe your child when they are restless or during procedures.

Referral to Music Therapy

Music therapy addresses specific goals related to health, development and well-being. Patients and families will be referred to music therapy if the medical team sees a need for support. Any health professional can refer a patient to the music therapy program. Referrals will be addressed according to need and urgency.

Referrals can be accepted for patients 28 weeks gestational age and older.



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Music Therapy Program

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Music Therapy in the NICU



Music therapy enhances “developmental goals in the NICU and functions to reduce stress, to provide developmental stimulation during a critical period of growth, to promote bonding with parents, and to facilitate communication, neurological, and social development”.

*Dr. Shmuel Arnon
Neonatologist and Researcher*



What is Music Therapy?

Music therapy is a research-based practice and part of your child's healthcare team. A Certified Music Therapist uses music to support patients in improving their health, development and well-being. Music therapy is different from music education and music entertainment because it focuses on meeting specific health goals.

In the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), the Music Therapist uses interventions to meet the needs of the hospital's youngest and smallest patients. The Music Therapist has received specialized training in Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Music Therapy (NICU-MT) to work with premature infants.



How can Music Therapy Help?

Music therapy can help a premature infant in a variety of ways that include:

- Providing developmental support
- Supporting parent-infant bonding
- Easing symptoms of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)
- Soothing infants who are frequently irritable/crying
- Assisting the infant with sleep difficulties
- Calming an infant during or after a procedure
- Supporting the development of self-soothing behaviours
- Providing end-of-life support for the family (including heartbeat recordings)

What Happens in Music Therapy?

Music therapy includes a variety of interventions. Depending on the infant's needs and age, sessions can include:




- The therapist providing live music appropriate to the infant's age and condition
- Joint kangaroo care and music therapy sessions
- Multimodal Neurologic Enhancement (an intervention combining live music, a pattern of touch and rocking)
- Educating parents on what they can do with their infant
- Introducing the infant to different sounds and stimulation

What is the Best Music to Use For a Premature Infant?

- Live music sung by a parent/caregiver (not recorded music) so it can be adjusted right away to the infant's condition
- Music that is:
 - Slow (slower than you think!)
 - Repetitive
 - Soft in volume
 - Stable – does not constantly change with low and high notes
 - With words to support language development, humming is still beneficial
- Mobiles with music should only be used with infants who are term (37+ weeks old)

- Please DO NOT play recorded music on your phone or iPod for your child. This could harm their hearing development and is not appropriate.

Appropriate Songs to Sing to Your Child:

- Songs should be from your native language or culture
- Songs that you (the parent) enjoy, but sung in an appropriate way for your child (slow, soft, etc.)
- Other suggestions:
 - Twinkle Twinkle Little Star 
 - You are My Sunshine 
 - Hush Little Baby
 - Five Little Ducks
 - Let it Be
 - Baby Beluga
 - Old MacDonald 

The Music Therapist's Qualifications:

In addition to many years of clinical experience, the Music Therapist has:

- Master of Music Therapy degree
- Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Music Therapy training
- Neurologic Music Therapy training
- Certification with the Canadian Association of Music Therapists
- Registration with the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario