

Music, Health and COVID-19

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Increased stress levels resulting from fear of COVID-19, physical distancing measures and economic problems may cause detrimental effects on mental health.¹ Music appears to have a universal salutogenetic effect, with participation in musical activities providing an effective means of alleviating stress, anxiety and depressed mood and serving as a proxy for social interaction. A nationwide Spanish survey conducted during the lockdown in April 2020 assessed the subjective experience of participants in regard to music as a means of improving psychological wellbeing.² The respondents reported an increase in time devoted to various musical activities and a perception that music facilitated relaxation and escape and improved mood and social wellbeing.² In a cross-cultural survey with over 5000 participants from Europe, India and the United States, more than half of the respondents reported using listening to and making music as an aid to coping with emotional and social stress factors during the lockdown in spring 2020.³ Music was chiefly used to reduce loneliness and stress and as an imaginary exchange and social surrogate.³ A 5-week pilot study from Italy examined the effectiveness of remote receptive music therapy as a support intervention to reduce stress and improve wellbeing in hospital staff assisting patients with COVID-19.⁴ Following the intervention, the participants reported a significant reduction in intensity of fear, tiredness and sadness.⁴ These favourable findings require confirmation. Musical activity is an easily accessible coping behaviour, which may be capable of aiding in stress management, improving emotional self-regulation, strengthening resilience and meeting social needs. The potential value of music-related behaviours in the management the current pandemic warrants more research.

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