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The healing power of music

By Angela Menghraj, Contributing Editor

How long have we humans been making music and using it to express ourselves? Most probably since the first people began making sounds with their own voices and with simple instruments. The pleasure was real and encouraged humans and their cousins (chimps and other mammals) to continue to making sounds with pitch and rhythm, even sounds that express fear and alarm. We may be familiar with Jane Goodall's documentaries in which she experiences firsthand the life of chimps in Tanzania and their noises.

In today's world the intensity of news reports can be disturbing. Wars and talk of terrorists' threats take over the airwaves. Of course we want to keep up with all that is happening, even if it means being exposed to the same information over and over. We remain glued to the television and watch a variety of newscasters report on the latest happenings. If the news is bad, there can be a negative effect on our emotions.

Here's where music can be a calming balm. What does music do for us? Music releases dopamine, a "feel good" brain chemical. It

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7 steps to better bone health

Keeping bones strong and healthy is key to maintaining an active lifestyle as you age. Bones are living tissues, with small amounts being absorbed and replaced in your body all the time. When bone is not replaced as quickly as it is absorbed, it can lead to osteoporosis — a disorder in which bones become very fragile and more likely to break.

The good news: You can take steps at any stage of life to improve bone health and reduce risk of fracture. Here are seven tips to get you started.

1. Eat right. Calcium is well-known for the important role it plays in building strong bones. Dairy products such as milk, cheese and yogurt; leafy greens; soy products; and fortified foods are good sources of calcium. You also need vitamin D to help your body absorb the calcium in your diet. If you're not getting enough calcium and vitamin D, ask your doctor if you need a supplement (see chart). Other nutrients also play

a role in supporting healthy bones, including protein, phosphorus, zinc, magnesium and vitamins K and A.

2. Be active every day. Weight-bearing exercise helps maintain bone strength. It can slow bone loss in older adults and help prevent osteoporosis. Exercise also builds muscle strength, coordination and balance, which can prevent falls. Weight-bearing exercise is activity in which your bones and muscles work against gravity, such as brisk walking, jogging, dancing and tennis.

3. Know your risk factors for osteoporosis. Women have a higher risk than men, and for both genders, the risk increases with age. Certain medicines and diseases; a family history of osteoporosis; and being small and thin increase risk. Ask your doctor about bone density testing and when it may be appropriate for you.

4. Maintain a healthy weight. Older adults who are overweight have a higher risk for falling,

How much calcium and vitamin D do you need?

The National Institutes of Health offers the following guidelines for daily calcium and vitamin D intake, including both food and supplements (if needed). Calcium is measured in milligrams (mg) and vitamin D is measured in International Units (IU).

ADULT WOMEN			ADULT MEN	
50 and younger	51-70	71 and older	70 and younger	71 and older
1,000 mg calcium	1,200 mg calcium	1,200 mg calcium	1,000 mg calcium	1,200 mg calcium
600 IU vitamin D	600 IU vitamin D	800 IU vitamin D	600 IU vitamin D	800 IU vitamin D

Important note: The daily values (DV) for calcium on food labels are based on a requirement of 1,000 mg of calcium per day. For example, 30 percent DV equals 300 mg and 10 percent DV equals 100 mg calcium. If you need 1,200 mg of calcium daily — as women over 50 and men over 70 do — you should get 120 percent DV. A food item with 300 mg of calcium, for instance, actually supplies only 25 percent of your daily requirement, not 30 percent.

according to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. Being underweight raises the risk of bone loss.

5. Don't smoke. Smoking can reduce bone mass.

6. Limit alcohol. Drinking heavily can lead to bone loss. The National Institutes of Health recommends limiting alcohol to no more than one drink per day.

7. Reduce your risk of falling. Simple modifications can make your home safer. Remove or secure throw rugs. Install grab bars in the shower. Add lighting and secure handrails on stairways.

GET AN EXPERT OPINION

Talk with your doctor about having the condition of your bones checked and ways you can keep them strong and healthy so you can participate in the activities you enjoy. 



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decreases cortisol, a stress-related hormone. Of course we have musical preferences. For some it's Broadway hits, others prefer songs of the '70s and '80s. The important thing is to listen to music that gives enjoyment, whether it brings up happy memories or sets us to tapping our feet or even getting up to dance. After a busy or exhausting day, it can be a wonderful treat to sit with a cup of tea and listen to soft, soothing music. All the better if you boost your immune system by playing a musical instrument or singing.

The late neurologist Dr. Oliver Sacks observed the effect music has on people. He came to the conclusion that music affects the brain often in positive ways. Listening to music is a very individual experience. We know people who grew up in a household where they heard the classical music of Bach and Chopin and continue to enjoy it today. Different kinds of music seem to increase the happiness of listeners. Music is related to memory and reaches those parts of the brain closely allied to memory. Notice the music that can bring tears to our eyes or smiles. Something in us is being affected.

People with cognitive impairment such as Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia respond to music they heard from the past. Beat and rhythms can elicit movement and laughter. We can see the healing power of music to lift a person from present reality to a place familiar and enjoyable. Music taps into biographical memories.

But even for those of us who function well in the world music can be a calming influence amid the noise that seems to pervade our environment. Forty-five minutes of soft music at bedtime can help us to sleep.

Isabella has a personalized music program where staff creates a playlist for each resident, based on interviews with residents and their families, so that he or she can listen to their favorite music on their own musical devices.

For more information about the music program, contact Isabella at **(212) 342-9359** or at info@isabella.org. 

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Both programs are free. Contact the Marketing Department at **(212) 342-9539** or Marilyn Pacheco at **(212) 342-9224** or mpacheco@isabella.org.

How palliative care and hospice care can help

By Angela Menghraj, Contributing Editor

The terms palliative care and hospice care are often confused. Although there are similarities between these types of care, there are also differences. The differences have to do with the needs of the individual person and what best satisfies the requirements of their situation to ease physical, emotional or spiritual pain.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Palliative care makes quality of life a top priority for the patient. It answers the questions, “How can I ease this person’s pain?” “What can I do for him or her?” and “What would he or she like from me?” Sometimes the person cannot answer any of these questions, so the caregiver suggests things such as “Would you be more comfortable if I moved your leg or your arm?” or “Would you like something warm or something cold to drink?” The caregiver wants to reduce discomfort so the individual benefits from this attentive care. Palliative care is really giving a response to a human situation. It may be anticipating the needs of another person or imagining

them. It may be as simple as asking oneself, “Knowing what I know about this individual, what would he or she want in this situation?” Palliative care makes daily living easier for someone coping with the discomfort that may be caused by a chronic condition.

Who benefits from palliative care? People living with dementia, their family and caregivers benefit. Their quality of life improves when the approach to care is undertaken by an interdisciplinary team of health care professionals. Continuity of care, psychosocial and spiritual support, in addition to education and the optimal treatment of symptoms, are all part of an effective palliative care program. It may even prolong life, as well as reduce unnecessary spending on avoidable hospital costs. Palliative care is not limited to end-of-life issues. Hospice care is.

HOSPICE CARE

Hospice care includes some of the same modalities as palliative care but is additionally concerned with providing support to the family or loved one. Medications may be



given but the expectation is that the individual is nearing the end of life. A cure isn't expected, but care and comfort are provided. How a person spends the final chapter of life has to do with spiritual, emotional and physical comfort provided by the hospice team and the family. The presence of family and friends may be the greatest solace for someone who is dying.

Medicare, private insurance or Medicaid may be used to pay for both types of care. Both palliative care and hospice care can be provided to an individual in a care facility — or at home. A nurse or social worker can provide guidance as to which type of care is needed and what the next steps should be. For information about palliative care and hospice care at Isabella, please contact Isabella at (212) 342-9539 or at info@isabella.org. 