

Music played to premature babies may lessen pain and improve feeding habits

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Music played to premature babies may help to reduce their pain and encourage better oral feeding, suggests research published ahead of print in the *Archives of Disease in Childhood*.

Increasing numbers of neonatal units are using music as a method to help improve behavioural and physiological outcomes or to manage [pain](#) during common procedures such as circumcision.

The benefits are said to be calmer infants and parents, a stable condition in the child's functions, higher oxygen saturation, faster weight gain and shorter hospital stays.

Previous research however, has not been strong enough to back this approach.

A team of researchers from the University of Alberta in Canada reviewed nine existing randomised trials published between 1989 and 2006 to see how effective and worthwhile it was using music in this way.

The trials they studied covered a diverse range of populations studied in different ways, which made it difficult to have definitive conclusions, but they found much preliminary evidence for therapeutic benefits of music for specific indications.

Outcomes most often reported in the trials were physiological measures such as heart rate, respiratory rate, oxygen saturation and pain.

One of the high quality studies reviewed that looked at using music during circumcision, showed music did have benefits for infants' [heart rate](#), [oxygen saturation](#), and pain.

In three of the studies that looked at heel prick - a common procedure for taking a [blood sample](#) from the heel of newborn infants - there was evidence that using music could have benefits for behaviour and pain.

The authors conclude: "There is preliminary evidence to suggest that music may have beneficial effects in terms of physiological parameters, behavioural states and pain reduction during painful medical procedures.

"While there is preliminary evidence for some therapeutic benefits of [music](#) for specific indications, these benefits need to be confirmed in well-designed, high quality trials."

Source: British Medical Journal ([news](#) : [web](#))

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