



Music Reduces Pregnancy Stress

Classical Music, Nature Sounds, Lullabies Reduce Stress, Anxiety, Depression

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Oct. 8, 2008 -- Forget pickles and ice cream. What do pregnant women really need to take the edge off? Brahms and "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star."

Music may reduce the stress, anxiety, and depression that many pregnant women experience. A study of 236 pregnant women in Taiwan shows that the participants who listened to music for 30 minutes per day for two weeks significantly reduced their stress, anxiety, and depression, compared with participants who did not. The study, conducted by researchers at the College of Nursing at Kaohsiung Medical University, was published in the *Journal of Clinical Nursing*.

The participants were all in either their second or third trimesters. All expected to have uncomplicated vaginal deliveries. They had similar backgrounds in terms of occupation, class, education level, and marital happiness.

About half were given CDs and asked to listen to them for a half hour per day. They could choose between classical music, nature sounds, Chinese children's rhymes and songs, or lullabies. Most chose nature sounds or lullabies. Participants kept diaries about when they listened to music. Popular times included while they were resting or doing chores.

The other half did not listen to the CDs. Both groups received routine prenatal care.

Women in the music group saw a significant drop in stress, anxiety, and depression scores, while the control group had a minor drop in stress. Overall, the changes seen in the music group were significantly different after the two weeks of music therapy.

"Pregnancy is a unique and stressful period for many expectant mothers and they suffer anxiety and depression because of the long time period involved. In fact, anxiety and depression during pregnancy is a similar health problem to postnatal depression," study author Chung-Hey Chen, who is now based at the National Cheng Kung University, says in a news release. "Any intervention that reduces these problems is to be welcomed. Our study shows that listening to suitable music provides a simple, cost-effective and non-invasive way of reducing stress, anxiety and depression during pregnancy."

SOURCES: Chang, M. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, October 2008, vol 17 issue 19: pp 2580-2587. News release, *Journal of Clinical Nursing*.

