

Music therapy in hospital

A music therapist may visit you and your baby during your stay. The role of music therapy is to support your baby, and you, through musical interventions. This may include:

- 🎵 Playing live music on guitar or Reverie Harp which is responsive to your baby
- 🎵 Singing or humming to your baby
- 🎵 Helping you compose special songs for your baby
- 🎵 Providing appropriate recorded music to use, and assessing your baby's response to this

These activities can help your baby remain calm and settled, sleep better, conserve energy, and support your baby's development.

The music is also useful for parents as it provides a relaxing environment, facilitating special bonding moments. Music can also be used to modify the overall environment in the room to make the alarms and other noise less obvious.

Twinkle twinkle

*Twinkle, twinkle little star
How I wonder what you are
Up above the world so high
Like a diamond in the sky
Twinkle, twinkle little star
How I wonder what you are*



*(Try changing the words to be about your baby:
eg. "(name), (name) I love you")*

For more information or to speak to a music therapist please contact:

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the
children's
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 The Sydney children's
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Music therapy for babies

Information about using music with your baby

Why use music and singing?

Across time and cultures, mums and dads have been singing lullabies to their babies – and for good reason. Current research is showing us that singing and playing music to babies is good for their development and helps form strong, loving bonds between a parent and their child.

Music and singing have a special role during your baby's hospital stay. It can bring you closer to your baby, and help soothe and comfort your baby.

Sing, hum, talk!

Your baby's favourite sound in the whole world is your voice. It is one of the first sounds they hear, and is a sound they love. They will listen to the sound of your voice, and feel safe and secure when they hear it. By singing, your baby will tend to listen for longer periods of time.

Research tells us that singing and talking to your baby helps with their writing, reading and language skills later in life.

We know singing in the open spaces of your baby's hospital room can be intimidating. As a start, try humming softly, or even talking in a sing-song way. It is good to sing a special or favourite song - if you don't know the words, hum or make up new words.

When you sing, you are breathing deeper, so this can help you relax as well – this is good for you and your baby.



When to use music

For babies in the hospital, we only play music or sing for 20-30 minutes at a time, for a maximum daily total of 3-4 hours. More than that could be too overwhelming for some babies.

At home, babies enjoy and tolerate as much active music making as possible. When playing recordings we suggest limiting their use so that the music is always purposeful (i.e. soothing, bedtime, or playtime).

Whilst recorded music can be helpful, research tells us that live singing (especially by parents) is even better! Don't just rely on recorded music.

When is a good time to play music/sing:

- ♪ when your baby is awake or at beginning of sleep
- ♪ during skin to skin cuddles
- ♪ before or after procedures

When should you avoid playing music:

- ♪ when your baby is in deep sleep
- ♪ when your baby is showing signs of being stressed (eg. arched back, increased heart rate, spread fingers, hiccupping)

Babies learn to recognise songs and tunes quickly and also learn that they can mean certain things. For example, some songs mean it's time to go to sleep, some might mean it's nappy change time, and so on. It is useful to start using music for routines and transitions early on, even during your hospital stay.

Recorded music

When playing music to your baby, there are a number of things to keep in mind:

- ♪ It is recommended that your baby is older than 28 weeks gestation before introducing your baby to music.
- ♪ Music should be slow, soothing, steady, and not too loud, and with not too many instruments – the simpler, the better. Also make sure the music does not have sudden changes in volume or speed (avoid using the radio or general classical music for this reason).
- ♪ If using recorded music that involves singing, try to find recordings of female voices as they are easier for your baby to hear. Also, use songs in your native language.
- ♪ It is not advised to play recorded music if your baby is ventilated or on respiratory support (as the volume needed for your baby to hear it would be too loud). You can still sing to your baby though – they will listen to your voice.
- ♪ Don't leave your baby unattended for long periods if music is playing, especially if it is the first time music is played.
- ♪ Musical mobiles and toys are not recommended in hospital. The music played by these toys is often very repetitive which may overwhelm your baby. The sound level also cannot be adjusted.
- ♪ Ask the music therapist for suitable music to play while your baby is in hospital.

