

## ***Music Therapy: The Health Benefits of Music*** ~ By Helen Cordes

Fascinating findings on how classic music can help kids with ADHD and colicky babies. Plus, the amazing [benefits of music](#) for kids of all ages. Kids love listening to music, and experts say it might even help their cognitive development. Now there's evidence that it may make little ones healthier as well. According to music therapists, certain tones, rhythms, and vibrations can help treat various medical and behavioral problems. For instance:

**Sweet Lullabies:** Premature babies, whose much-needed energy is often drained by stress, seem to thrive when relaxing music is played. In a study from Utah Bally Regional Medical Center, in Provo, two 20-minute doses of vocal lullaby tapes each day slowed preemies' heart rates and increased the amounts of formula and oxygen they took in. Any song with a soothing melody and steady rhythm can also calm a colicky or teething baby, says Rosalie Pratt, a music professor at Brigham Young University who oversaw the preemie research. Instrumental music is soothing, but a human voice will make babies feel more secure. "A parent's voice is best," says Pratt, "even if you can't carry a tune or if you make up the lyrics."

**Classical Treatment:** Brigham Young researchers found that when a group of kids with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), ages 7 to 17, listened to three 40-minute recordings of classical music a week, their brain waves moved to higher levels that allowed them to focus more on tasks while they listened. And 70 percent of the kids continued to show improvement from regular music sessions six months later. Rhythmic music, such as Mozart or Haydn, can help kids without ADHD settle down, too. Play a few pieces periodically throughout the day or whenever your child is restless, suggests Pratt, such as after school and before dinner. Some kids work well with music playing during homework, others don't. For kids who have trouble following directions, try turning directions into rhythmic, sing-songy tunes, such as Now-it's-time-to-put-on-our-shoes, suggests Don Campbell, author of *The Mozart Effect*, a book about the benefits of music. Rhythm is perceived differently by the brain, he says, so kids are more attentive when you say things musically.