

# fact sheet

## Music Therapy

# Music therapy

### What is music therapy?

Music therapy is an allied health service provided as part of the multi-disciplinary team at the Royal Children's Hospital. Music therapy involves the use of age-appropriate music to support children, adolescents, and their families throughout their treatment, with the aim of helping them reach their fullest potential while in the hospital environment.

A registered music therapist (RMT) is a qualified therapist who has completed an accredited course at a university. RMTs have studied all aspects of music performance and theory, as well as psychology, physiology and social theory, and models of therapeutic intervention. RMTs are registered with the Australian Music Therapy Association Inc.

### Why music therapy?

A child may receive music therapy in the early stages of their hospital stay to help them relax and sleep better, increase their level of alertness and help them cope with the hospital environment.

Music therapy can be effective in meeting the diverse psychosocial needs of children through songwriting and improvisation, and can offer opportunities for self-expression and communication. It can also help children identify their strengths, enabling them to maintain a sense of self-esteem and dignity.

### Music therapy includes:

- Singing
- Relaxation
- Songwriting
- Improvisation
- Playing instruments
- Listening to music
- Structured group sessions
- Multimodal stimulation
- Developmental stimulation



### Music therapy and rehabilitation

As a patient's recovery progresses, music therapy may be combined with other therapies, such as occupational and physiotherapy, to focus on more complex goals, such as motor skills, cognitive skills and speech/language/communication skills.

### Who can benefit from music therapy?

- chronically ill/long-term patients
- patients with developmental delay
- patients who are isolated or bed-bound
- patients who are anxious or depressed
- patients who are physically impaired
- frequently admitted patients
- patients who have experienced trauma.

Patients are referred to music therapy by medical, nursing or allied health staff.

Note: Music therapy services may not be available to every ward/area of the hospital.



Most people identify music as a meaningful part of everyday life. By taking into account a child or young person’s individual tastes, music can be familiar and grounding in the unpredictable hospital environment. Music therapy can offer patients a sense of control and an avenue for positive self-expression, particularly when they have a say in what activities will be explored.

### What does a music therapy session involve?

The music therapist will first assess a patient to identify his/her individual abilities and needs. A therapy program will then be tailored to the individual needs of your child, including personalised goals that address areas of concern. Music therapy goals can include using music to assist with pain and anxiety management, to enhance communication, and create opportunities for child/family bonding through music.

A music therapist will play guitar or keyboard and sing, and provide a range of age-appropriate percussion instruments for your child and family to explore. Prior musical experience is not necessary and the program will be based on your child or adolescent’s musical preferences. The music therapist will document and evaluate sessions to ensure the effectiveness of the program outcomes.

### Infants and children

Live familiar music combined with physical, cognitive and social activities provides developmental stimulation, increases interaction, and encourages participation and motivation. Soothing music can help reduce irritability, pain or anxiety, and also encourage child/family bonding. Making music together and writing songs can provide an avenue for creative self-expression.

### Adolescents

Adolescents can play an active role in developing their own music therapy program. They can explore a range of musical activities with their therapist and choose what feels right for them. This can include songwriting,

improvisation and/or singing the songs of favourite bands and artists. Technology is also available for the production of personalised audio/visual projects. Live music combined with relaxation techniques is also offered to help reduce pain and anxiety.

### Useful websites

**Australian Music Therapy Association**  
[www.austmta.org.au](http://www.austmta.org.au)

**Playgroup Queensland**  
[www.playgroupaustralia.com.au/qld](http://www.playgroupaustralia.com.au/qld)

**Boppin’ Babies**  
[www.boppinbabies.com](http://www.boppinbabies.com)

### Contact us

**Music Therapy**  
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**My music therapist is:**

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**Pager no:** .....

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