Can Certain Music Help Reduce Epileptic Seizures?

Mozart's classical music may be considered "a supplemental therapeutic option" to lessening seizures in those with epilepsy.

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Many people with epilepsy suffer from debilitating seizures that often occur up to dozens of times each day. Treatments include antiseizure medicines and surgery, but their benefits may be limited. Another somewhat surprising approach may help, however, according to a new study published in the journal Epilepsia Open that found that listening to the music of Mozart might possibly reduce seizures in those with this common neurological disorder, reports the University Health Network in Toronto.

For the yearlong study, researchers evaluated the effect of Mozart's melody Sonata for Two Pianos in D Major, K. 448 on reducing seizures compared with a scrambled version of the original Mozart composition. (The latter rendition of the musical work sounded like noise because it was shuffled randomly and lacked rhythmic quality.)

After a three-month baseline period, scientists required half of the study's 13 participants to listen to Mozart's sonata once a day for three months and then instructed individuals to switch to the scrambled version for the following three months. The rest of the group followed a reverse procedure. All patients documented the frequency of their seizures in diaries and remained on the same drug regimen.

"Our results showed daily listening to Mozart K.448 was associated with reducing seizure frequency in adult individuals with epilepsy," said Marjan Rafiee, PhD, of the Krembil Brain Institute in Toronto and Toronto Western Hospital—University Health Network. "This suggests that daily Mozart listening may be considered a supplemental therapeutic option to reduce seizures in individuals with epilepsy."

Scientists plan to conduct this investigation using larger groups of people over a longer period of time. In doing so, they hope to create more opportunities for people with epilepsy to benefit from listening to music and improve the overall understanding of music's effect on epilepsy and the brain, Rafiee said.

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