

Singing is beneficial for memory and mood especially in early dementia

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Researchers led by Dr. Teppo Särkämö at University of Helsinki, Finland have revealed that caregiver-implemented musical leisure activities, particularly singing, are cognitively and emotionally beneficial especially in the early stages of dementia. The findings could help improve dementia care and better target the use of music in different stages of dementia. The research was published today in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*.

Initially, the researchers recruited 89 dyads of persons with mild to moderate dementia and their caregivers to a single-blind [randomized controlled trial](#) in which they received a 10-week music coaching intervention involving either regular singing or listening to familiar songs or standard care. Previously, the results from a 9-month longitudinal follow-up with neuropsychological tests and mood questionnaires showed that the musical activities were able to enhance various cognitive skills, such as working memory, executive functions, and orientation, and alleviate depression compared to standard care.

Here, the focus of the researchers was to uncover how different clinical and demographic factors influence the specific cognitive and emotional effects of the two music interventions and, thereby, determine who benefits most from music. Looking at the backgrounds of the [dementia patients](#), the researchers systematically evaluated the impact of dementia severity, etiology, age, care situation, and previous musical hobbies on the efficacy of the music interventions.

Singing was found to be beneficial for working memory, executive function, and orientation especially in persons with mild dementia and younger (music interventions).

"Given the increasing global prevalence and burden of dementia and the limited resources in public health care for persons with dementia and

their family caregivers, it is important to find alternative ways to maintain and stimulate cognitive, emotional, and social well-being in this population. Our findings suggest that musical leisure activities could be easily applied and widely used in [dementia care](#) and rehabilitation. Especially stimulating and engaging activities, such as singing, seem to be very promising for maintaining memory functioning in the early stages of [dementia](#)," Särkämö concludes.

More information: Clinical and Demographic Factors Associated with the Cognitive and Emotional Efficacy of Regular Musical Activities in Dementia. *J Alzheimers Dis.* 2015 Oct 19. [Epub ahead of print].

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