Music for a Healthy Mind and Body

Patients having an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) test must lie very still for 30 to 60 minutes, often enclosed inside the machine's tube. Because of that, the most valuable piece of equipment in MRI testing often isn't the multimillion-dollar scanner. It's something that costs far less—the headphones that many centers put on patients so they can listen to their favorite type of music while undergoing the test.

That music makes time seem to pass more quickly and enjoyably. It also serves an important health function by lowering stress and reducing anxiety.

Music can deliver psychological and physical benefits in a wide range of medical uses and health conditions. A study released in August 2009 looked at open-heart surgery patients who listened to music on the day after their surgery. Those patients experienced increased relaxation levels as well as higher levels of the neurotransmitter oxytocin, a hormone related to feelings of bonding and comfort.

Listening to or performing instrumental music, as well as singing (individually or communally in a choir), can reduce blood pressure, lessen pain and anxiety, ease stress and may help keep cognition sharp—all at low cost and without adding medication. Singing was found to have such a positive effect on the depression that often follows knee surgery that one group of Italian researchers advocated music therapy over drug intervention for such patients.

Whether you play an instrument or not, you can benefit from the power of music to help heal. Sing out loud by yourself at home or in a community group, take a music player along when you go for any medical test or procedure and remember to turn on your favorite tunes when stress intensifies.
Just 30 minutes of what researchers call "music intervention" is often enough to reduce anxiety and increase relaxation. Your body and spirit will feel the difference.

Source: