

A photograph of a newborn baby in a NICU incubator, wearing a pink hat and being held by a person's hands. The text "NICU Music Therapy" is overlaid in a large, bold, teal font.

NICU Music Therapy

Fact Sheet

What is Music Therapy?

- Medical Music Therapy is an established healthcare profession that utilizes music and music interventions to address the biopsychosocial needs of patients in a hospital setting. Services in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit are provided by a Board-Certified Music Therapist who has completed an approved music therapy program.

Music Therapy Interventions

- **1. Multimodal Neurological Enhancement (MNE)**

MNE is a 22 step intervention that layers auditory, tactile, and vestibular input to assist premature infants in learning to organize and tolerate diverse stimulation while also decreasing stress responses. This is accomplished by using lullaby singing with or without guitar and an organized tactile progression. During these sessions, caregivers are included to increase parent-infant bonding, education on premature development and to promote overall confidence interacting with their infant.

- **2. Pacifier Activated Lullaby (PAL®)**

Pacifier Activated Lullaby (PAL®) is a medical device that encourages and reinforces the development of non-nutritive sucking (NNS) of premature infants. This is accomplished by giving positive feedback in the form of music/mother's voice as an auditory input in direct response to effective sucking.



□ 3. Music Therapy with Infants with NAS

Based on clinical observation, interdisciplinary recommendations, and research in other NICU population groups who have sensory needs, the music therapy interventions utilized with this population during the weaning process are:

- Parent Education: discuss and teach comfort measures, including use of music while ultimately empowering parents to be more engaged in the care of their baby.
- Pacification: Live Singing, rocking, and patting progression used when the infant is fussy, crying, or irritable to stabilize the infant's behavioral state and increase sleeping behavior.
- PAL® Therapy: use of the PAL to decrease infant's excessive suck rate and establish a more coordinated, mature, and self-soothing sucking pattern.

□ 4. Music Listening

Live or recorded lullabies in the infant's native language are utilized to promote homeostasis and promote early language development. When caregivers are present they are empowered to use their voice with their child and take part in their infant's care. If caregivers are not able to be at bedside as often as they would like, recording is also available when appropriate.

5. Familial Support

Parent education, empowerment, and counseling is arguably one of the most beneficial services a music therapist can provide during an infant's NICU hospitalization. Through basic counseling and education on infant development and tolerance to stimuli, parents are better equipped to care for their infant during this traumatic period. This not only increases parental involvement in their infant's care, but also leads to stronger parent/infant attachment.

References

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Hamm, E. L. & Walworth, D. (2013). Using the Pacifier Activated Lullaby® with infants diagnosed with neonatal abstinence syndrome. *Imagine*, 4(1), 62-63.