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## Relaxation Tapes or Mozart Lower Blood Pressure

Approaches could supplement other therapies to treat the condition, study says

By **Serena Gordon**

*HealthDay Reporter*

WEDNESDAY, Sept. 17 (HealthDay News) -- Listening to relaxation tapes or classical music by Mozart might reduce your blood pressure if you listen for three times a week or more.

In a study of 41 seniors living in retirement communities, researchers found that regularly listening to relaxation tapes reduced average systolic (the top number) blood pressure readings by 9 mm/Hg, while those who regularly listened to Mozart saw a 7 mm/Hg reduction in their blood pressure.

"This is a simple program that's very easy to do, and blood pressure did decrease," said the study's lead author, Jean Tang, an assistant professor at the College of Nursing at Seattle University in Washington. But, she added, "It won't replace medicine. It can only reduce blood pressure to a certain point -- it's like making lifestyle changes."

What the researchers couldn't investigate was if the drop in blood pressure was enough to make a significant difference in the study volunteers' health.

Tang was expected to present the findings Sept. 17 at the American Heart Association's annual fall conference of the Council for High Blood Pressure Research, in Atlanta.

"High blood pressure is clearly a very significant and common problem. Approximately one in four people have hypertension, and about two-thirds of people with hypertension aren't adequately controlled," said cardiologist Dr. Robert Ostfeld, of Montefiore Medical Center in New York City.

"This is a small, but very interesting study on a very safe and doable intervention," he added, but noted, "It's not clear if the reduction is sustained over time."

Tang's study included two randomly assigned groups of seniors. The first group listened to a 12-minute relaxation tape with the sound of ocean waves along with a man's voice guiding the participants through breathing and relaxation exercises. The second group listened to a 12-minute Mozart sonata. Each group was asked to participate three times a week for four months.

During this time, the researchers took blood pressure readings before the intervention and after. Once the active part of the study was done, the researchers asked the study participants to continue listening to the relaxation tape or to Mozart for three times a week, if possible. The researchers took follow-up blood pressure readings at one month and three months after the active period of the study had ended.

Before the intervention, the average blood pressure for the relaxation tape group was 141/73 mm/Hg; after the intervention, it was 132/70 mm/Hg. For the Mozart group, the average pre-intervention blood pressure was 141/71 mm/Hg; after the intervention, the average was 134/69 mm/Hg.

The differences in systolic blood pressure readings reached statistical significance in both groups. The drop in diastolic pressure (the bottom number) didn't reach statistical significance for either group.

After three months, the researchers found that only about half of the seniors had continued listening to the relaxation tapes or to Mozart three times a week. Tang said the reduction in blood pressure only persisted for those who continued with the intervention program.

Tang said using a relaxation tape with instruction is likely a good supplementary treatment for lowering blood pressure. Eating right and exercising are also important, said both Tang and Ostfeld. "Exercise is the fountain of youth," added Ostfeld.

Both experts cautioned that no one should think that relaxation exercises can replace blood pressure medication. Relaxation or listening to classical music is an additional way to help lower your blood pressure further but isn't an intervention that replaces any others.

### More information

The American Academy of Family Physician's FamilyDoctor Web site has more information on getting your [blood pressure under control](#).

*SOURCES: Jean Tang, Ph.D., assistant professor, College of Nursing at Seattle University, Seattle, Wash.; Robert Ostfeld, M.D., cardiologist, associate professor of clinical medicine, Montefiore Medical Center, New York City; Sept. 17, 2008, presentation, the American Heart Association's annual fall conference of the Council for High Blood Pressure Research, Atlanta*

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