

## KIDS' HEALTH &amp; SAFETY

## Musical Minds

**WE ALL LOVE MUSIC.** It can motivate, inspire, energize, calm and bring solace in hard times. Did you know the power of music also has a profound effect on our brain? Children can greatly benefit from music in their life to help encourage the development of their brains, preparing them for lifelong benefits in math, reading and emotional literacy.

## THE SOUND OF MUSIC

Exposing children to music and movement in the early years can have a huge impact on their developing brains and set them up for success in school and life. Many studies have shown, time and again, that music education promotes and accelerates brain development in the areas responsible for language, sound, reading and speech perception. Music also has many physical benefits including teaching children rhythm, improving immune function and regulating mood. Music can cheer, calm, soothe or reduce stress and anxiety. Listening or playing music teaches important math and communication skills. Musical patterns, sequencing and the memorization of music helps children build math skills. Songs teach story, meaning and emotion, all important skills children will need when learning to read and become emotionally competent, effective communicators.

## SHAKE, WIGGLE AND ROLL

Moving our bodies to music releases feel-good chemicals in our brain which increase joy and reduce stress by stimulating our limbic system, the part of our brain that impacts every other part of our brain. Daily exposure to feel-good music and movement puts our limbic system in a relaxed emotional state which is ideal for learning and memory.

## BUILDING BRIDGES

Our brain builds pathways from repetitive experiences. In music, the components of rhythm, pitch intervals and repeating patterns have a profound effect on the brain and



learning. Singing, dancing and making music are among the healthiest brain food for little ones! Neural pathways are grown and strengthened or pruned away from no use in direct correlation to the quality of brain development experienced in the early years. Music incorporates repetition and novelty, both important when developing new skills.

## READY, SET, WRITE!

The organizational aspect of music, from nursery rhymes to symphonies, develops the sequential parts of brain processing as well as the parts of the brain responsible for refined, repetitive movements such as writing.

Help children in your care build a strong and healthy brain by utilizing music and movement in their daily routine. Sing songs, have a dance party, play calming and soothing music at naptime. Use music and movement at transition times for an excellent way to make cleaning up, washing hands or putting on jackets a fun, brain-building activity!

— Rachel O'Neal  
Child Health and Nutrition Specialist