

A dose of music

with your COVID-19 vaccination



Why music with your COVID-19 vaccination?

Not everyone likes needles, but we all need to have this jab.

Vaccinations can cause anxiety and agitation especially for those with an impairment, disability or condition e.g. dementia. Waiting or an unfamiliar journey can exacerbate disorientation and anxiety.

While music can't eliminate any physical pain, it can help manage the experience and physiological symptoms, leading to a more pleasant experience.

Research has shown music can **lessen distress** by almost half when used during vaccination programmes, and almost double the level of coping behaviour. It can be a powerful **distraction** from pain.

Salisbury Cathedral has shown how music has put people at ease.

How does music help?

Environment – music can help put people at ease when they are feeling anxious or stressed. It can also help staff motivation and morale, keeping spirits lifted.

Physiologically – appropriate music can help reduce heart rate, lower blood pressure, slow breathing, so reducing stress hormones. This helps to reduce anxiety, making the vaccination more manageable and lifting mood.

Emotionally / psychologically – music can provide a distraction and different focus. It can be empowering in helping people to manage their emotional / physiological response to the vaccination. Music sparks conversation, which helps everyone feel connected.

For individuals

Before – if you're going for your job with someone, let them know you would like some music available perhaps en route, during and after. Choose music / songs you might want to listen to – perhaps put a playlist together that you find relaxing. Ask for help if you need support with a device (e.g. phone or MP3 player) to play it on or help creating your playlist.

During – listen to your music, hum or sing and invite others to sing with you.

After – use your music to reassure, reset your mood and help you move on to the next part of your day.

For carers / supporters

Constant reassurance, just being there and...

Before – think about whether the person you are accompanying would like music available, what music they enjoy, and how they would like to listen / experience it. Consider playing it before setting out and during the journey so they are calmer on arrival.

During – provide reassurance by singing or tapping along. If it's not possible to listen to a device, you could sing, hum or talk about a piece of music or musical experience that is familiar and reassuring.

After – continue to use music to reassure. Later, or in following days, the person with dementia might experience pain or discomfort from arm ache. Music can help distract, reassure and refocus when they may not recall the vaccination.

For health practitioners

Check if the person you're vaccinating has dementia or another condition, impairment or neurodivergence. Suggest personal music as a distraction for anxiety.

Environment – think about how music can help to make your vaccine space more friendly. Music can encourage, reassure and relax people, aiding effective care and putting people at ease. Usually, a slower tempo and familiar music works best. Consider music that would motivate you. Mood is infectious!

Music as a tool to manage anxiety – music can help people with managing their anxiety. Be aware that some people might want to listen to music via a device. Mitigate adverse effects – ensure music is played at the optimum level, helping people feel comfortable.



Remember, listening to music is a choice, so don't impose it on people if they don't want it.

Further dementia-specific guidance

For further guidance on how to support people living with dementia during vaccinations, please see Dementia UK's '**Giving the COVID-19 vaccine to someone living with dementia**' guidance.

