

You May Not Sing Like Michael Jackson... But Do It Anyway



There is no denying that everyone cannot sing like Michael Jackson or Frank Sinatra. But experts believe that no matter how bad you sound, it is beneficial to limber up your larynxes more often. There is a growing body of research that shows bursting into song is good for both your body and brain.

According to Dr Gottfried Schlaug, who studies brain imaging and music at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, singing alone or with others triggers the reward system in the brain and releases dopamine. This makes us feel better.

Singing can provide benefits anytime and anywhere. If we recall the recent lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw many instances where people around the globe sang songs from their balconies to relieve stress and anxiety.

It really doesn't matter how well you sing, whether you sing in public or alone or whether you sing solo or in a group. The point is that singing and music overall are beneficial for health. In recent years, scientists have studied the benefits of singing and music in a range of areas, from relieving pain to minimising snoring and helping improve posture and muscle tension.

Singing also has a positive impact on lung function. Hitting all the notes in a song requires deep breathing, which improves oxygen intake. This can help people with asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Most of all, singing, while great for your body, is even better for your brain. It flicks on the dopamine switch, releases feel-good hormones like oxytocin and lowers cortisol levels, thus reducing stress.

A [study published in BMJ Supportive and Palliative Care](#) showed singing also helps people who've lost a loved one cope with grief. Other research published in [2016 in Evolution and Human Behavior](#) shows singing in a choir improves feelings of social connectedness. A [metanalysis of several studies](#) published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society shows singing can trigger otherwise inaccessible memories for people with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. Singing can activate brain locations where musical memories are stored. That is why we often see people with dementia light up when they hear something familiar.

People who have suffered brain damage from a stroke can often sing words or phrases even if those words are not the same. Thus, using music and singing with stroke patients can facilitate their recovery. Why this happens remains unclear, but one theory is that singing fires up brain activity and connects networks in different regions of the brain, particularly on the right side of the brain.

When a stroke occurs on the left side of the brain, it results in communication problems. Singing words and phrases could help the right side of the brain run more efficiently.

The point is: even if you have a lousy voice, or if you prefer to sing in the shower, just keep doing it. It is an easy activity and one that may have therapeutical potential and health benefits. You don't need to spend money on this activity; you don't need an instrument. So what are you waiting for? Sing away!

Source: [American Heart Association](#)

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Published on : Tue, 19 Oct 2021