



## Tune Out Arthritis

If you're one of the 40 million Americans with arthritis, 20 minutes spent listening to music can help reduce the pain, according to a study published in the *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. Researchers put 66 arthritis patients in two groups. One listened to Mozart for 20 minutes a day; the other spent 20 minutes sitting in silence or reading. Participants in the music group had steadily decreasing pain over a 14-day period, while those who sat in silence did not experience any change.

The researchers have discovered that music decreases the release of a neurotransmitter called substance P, which causes arthritis pain. "Music [also] breaks the cycle of osteoarthritis pain through distraction, relaxation, and refocusing of thoughts," explains Ruth McCaffrey, R.N., lead author of the study and assistant professor of nursing at Florida Atlantic University. There is no right or wrong music for pain reduction, the researchers note, so choose any tune that you find soothing and relaxing.

—Amy Paturel



**For the first time, three health organization heavyweights** have released unified guidelines. Together, the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, and American Diabetes Association suggest key lifestyle changes that can prevent or delay cancer, heart disease, and diabetes, which combined account for two out of three deaths in the United States. The four key changes: Eat a healthful diet dominated by fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products; exercise by doing at least 30 minutes of activity, five days per week; quit smoking; and see your physician regularly. For more information, call 866-399-6789 or visit [www.everydaychoices.org](http://www.everydaychoices.org).

## The Right Tree for Your Family

Christmas trees are a holiday icon, and choosing the right one for your home can make all the difference in the yuletide health of you and your family.

■ **Strong scents bother you?** Try a Leyland Cypress, Austrian Pine, or Afghan Pine tree. These have moderate aromas that will make even sensitive noses happy.

■ **If you're allergic to mold,** go with an artificial tree, since mold can attach itself to the branches and needles of real ones. Be sure to wipe the tree with a wet cloth from year to year, however, as the dust that accumulates can aggravate asthma and allergy symptoms, says Brian Smart, M.D., an allergist in Naperville, Illinois.

■ **If you have children or pets around,** consider a small tabletop tree so tykes and pooches won't be able to reach the ornaments. There's also less risk of them running into it or grabbing low branches. Your dog or cat can also be sickened by aspirin or plant food added to the tree's water to extend its life, says Stephanie Shain, director of outreach for companion animals at the Humane Society of the United States in Washington, D.C.

—Alicia Reece

