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Glow Blogs

Music to Our Bellies

March 31st, 2008 by [art mama](#)

As a long-time music lover, I always enjoyed hearing stories about pregnant women who played music to their bellies only to have that child later become a musical prodigy. One friend told me a story about a husband who played his guitar right up against his wife's pregnant belly and their son became a guitar whiz. Unfortunately, I only *appreciate* music, and besides my wishlist accomplishment of learning to play the cello for a brief stint, and my husband's attempt to learn the bass guitar, we can only play our eclectic mix of CD's like the best of them.



Of course I want to believe that music-lovers and musicians will raise the same. And it makes sense, doesn't it, that if we expose our little ones to music of all types when they are dancing and tumbling around in the womb, they will come out as natural born appreciators of music. But I was interested to see if there were studies on this topic, and "hear" is what I found out...

It is a common belief that if you play calming music or lullabies to your baby in utero—for instance, placing your iPod headphones on the belly—your little peanut will react by kicking and moving, or becoming suddenly still, especially in the third trimester. Some even believe that music played while in the womb will be remembered by the baby up to a year after birth.



According to an [article on SmartMommy.com](#), it is believed that in the 7th month of pregnancy, the soothing sounds of music in the womb can stimulate your baby's ear, brain and body development in preparation for sound and language comprehension. Thomas Verny, M.D., author of *The Secret Life of the Unborn Child* (Dell, 1994) said, "Musicologists seem to agree that rhythms, similar to the mother's heartbeat, have the most calming effect" on babies in utero. This can also be used as a tool to calm a fussy newborn.

One woman reported to [BBC News Health](#): "I used to have a daily bath and listen to Ella Fitzgerald at 6pm. It was my peace time. When she was born she was very fractious with colic. We used to play Ella Fitzgerald at 3am to try to settle her, and it really worked."

But there are differing opinions on what is called the "Mozart Effect," which says that playing classical music to babies in utero increases brain activity and stimulation, which thereby is an intelligence and IQ booster. An online BBC article [-Does Classical Music Make Babies Smarter?](#) — states that "Numerous studies conclude that playing music to babies in the womb and in the early years helps build the neural bridges along which thoughts and information travel. And research suggests it can stimulate the brain's alpha waves, creating a feeling of calm."

It's a fact that a fetus develops their ability to hear 5 months into pregnancy, and can therefore react to sounds outside the womb, but there is no hard evidence that proves that playing classical music is a direct link to higher intellectual development.

In the same BBC article, Professor Paul Robertson, a leading expert in musicology, believes it's important the best music is made available to babies at the earliest possible stage of their growth.

My thoughts are, whether my baby becomes the next little genius or not, it can't hurt to encourage her development with this great source of entertainment (that is far better than TV). If nothing else, it will be a way to bond with your baby before she arrives, and it will definitely be a way to share a fun and necessary form of the Arts for many years to come. So crank up that CD, go to Baby & Me music classes, and enjoy your happy time together!



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