

## healing tunes

Bob Marley was onto something when he wrote “One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain.” He may have been singing from personal experience, but according to a recent study in the *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, there’s some science behind the observation.

Researchers investigated the effects of music on chronic, non-malignant pain and found that listening to music for one hour a day for seven days decreased self-reported pain levels. On top of that, the tunes also decreased depression and disability while increasing people’s feelings of power. Which is the best music to help achy joints (and the various problems that come with them)? Here are the guidelines given to the study participants:

- To ease muscle tension and stiffness, anger, or depression, choose familiar upbeat music.

- If you need help with relaxation or fighting anxiety, stick with slow, melodious and pleasant familiar music or nature sounds.

- For a jolt of energy, get your groove on with energetic, rhythmic, familiar music.

Sandra L. Siedlecki, Ph.D., R.N., CNS, and a senior nurse researcher with the Cleveland Clinic, coauthored the study. She highlights the importance of more research on “self-care techniques that can be easily taught and used to empower people to cope with chronic pain.” Her main advice for pain sufferers: “Take control. Identify how you feel in general and try to alter these feelings.”

—D.S.B.



## fresh mouth

What do eating garlic and having your period have in common? Both cause bad breath. While any food can cause halitosis due to the presence of live bacteria in the mouth, certain ones—like garlic, onions, fish, meat and dairy products—are worse because they contain sulfur compounds, which are digested and absorbed by the bloodstream and expelled by the lungs.

Your “monthly friend” has a sulfur hook, too, since lower estrogen levels cause sloughing of the gum lining. So if gums bleed, bacteria collect creating odorous sulfur particles.

If you’re about to get your period on the weekend of an Italian dinner party, don’t despair. After studying bad breath for 20 years, Mel Rosenberg, Ph.D., professor of microbiology at the School of Dental Medicine at Tel Aviv University, knows how to slay this romance-killing demon: increase your saliva flow. His tips:

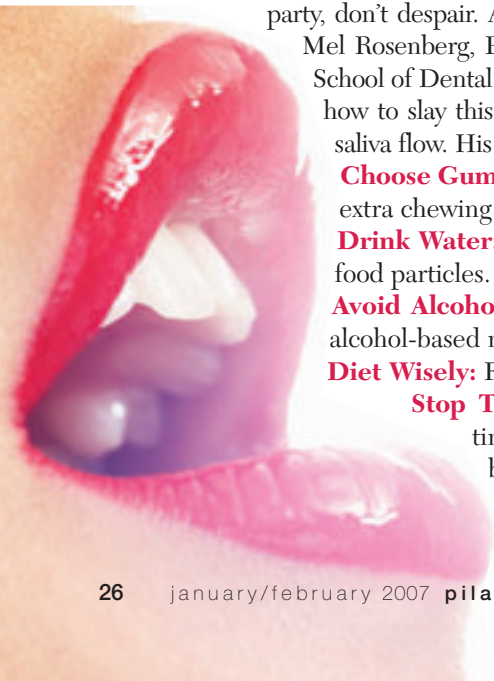
**Choose Gum Over Mints:** Mints are good, but the extra chewing involved with gum is better.

**Drink Water:** It washes away bacteria-encouraging food particles.

**Avoid Alcohol:** Since it’s dehydrating, nix it. Avoid alcohol-based mouthwashes, too.

**Diet Wisely:** Fasting dries the mouth.

**Stop Talking:** Gabbing for long periods of time can cause dry mouth. Sip water between sentences. —Wendy Gist



# flower power

If pain is dragging you down, let lavender lift you up. “Pure, therapeutic-quality lavender oil is effective for relief of muscle, headache and joint pain,” says Shellie Enteen, who uses it in her massage and aromatherapy practice in Greer, SC. Enteen points out that lavender’s use as an emergency treatment for pain dates back to 1929. Recent studies from the Isfahan University of Medical Sciences in Iran and the Catholic University in Korea substantiate her experience.

When combined with massage, acupuncture, bathing and inhalation, “lavender is one essential oil that can be applied undiluted to the skin,” says Enteen. “One drop applied to each temple can provide headache relief; several drops can be added undiluted to bathwater or placed directly on an acupuncture point,” she notes.

Science also supports lavender’s healing qualities when it comes to neck pain. As few as eight sessions of acupuncture with aromatic lavender can provide short-term relief, concludes a 2006 study in *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*. “It is believed to work by correcting the balance of energy or *qi* in the body,” says study author Vera Yip, Ph.D., an aromatherapist and specialist in musculoskeletal pain management at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. “Another theory suggests that acupuncture stimulates the body to produce endorphins, which reduce pain.”

For Valentine’s Day, give your special someone a lavender oil massage. It’s best to dilute the essential oil into a carrier oil of cold-pressed nut, seed, vegetable or jojoba. Dim the lights, put on soft music and let the stroking begin. Chances are, they’ll be feeling no pain. (Visit [www.naha.org](http://www.naha.org) for more information.)

— W.G.



## hypertension tamer

If you suffer from high blood pressure—like one in every three American adults—RESPERATE may be for you. It looks and acts like a portable CD player, but this FDA-approved gadget doesn’t blast hip-hop. But it may lower your hypertension by teaching you how to develop fluid breathing by imitating rhythmic tones.



Somewhat like controlled Pilates breathing, RESPERATE offers a secondary and unexpected benefit: It calms the mind. To operate the user-friendly device, sit in a chair, fasten a sensor strap around your chest, don a headset that emits paced tones and try to match your breathing to a set tempo. You’ll gradually reach the therapeutic target of fewer than 10 breaths per minute, which enables constricted blood vessels to relax and reduces your blood pressure. Clinical trials show that this device can dramatically lower pressure in four to six weeks. (RESPERATE sells for \$299 at most pharmacies; [www.resperate.com](http://www.resperate.com).)

— W.G.

## play shoe fairy

If you’re a woman, chances are you’ve got a small stockpile of shoes in your bedroom. Sure, you love ’em like children, but they could be doing a disadvantaged stranger a world of good. Soles4Souls Purpose-Driven Footwear, a nonprofit organization founded after the 2004 tsunami and expanded during Hurricane Katrina, will refurbish your worn shoes and donate them to needy folks the world over. Recently Soles4Souls sent 85,000 pairs of new and used shoes to Ugandan children. So scour your closets and ask your friends and people in your Pilates classes for donations. It’ll make you feel better than the softest suede boots. Check out [Soles4Souls.org](http://Soles4Souls.org).

— A.A.

