

Piano Lessons May Relieve Chemo Brain

In addition to improvements in attention and cognition, participants said learning the piano was enjoyable and relaxing.

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Learning to play the piano may help alleviate cognitive side effects associated with cancer chemotherapy, according to a small study. Many people undergoing treatment experience slow thinking, impaired concentration and memory lapses—commonly known as brain fog or chemo brain—due to the drugs themselves or side effects, such as fatigue, stress and poor sleep.

Researchers evaluated a piano training protocol dubbed Keys to Staying Sharp in a pilot study of 15 people receiving treatment for breast cancer. The women attended once-weekly classes for nine weeks and were asked to practice at least a half hour daily. While both one-on-one and group lessons offered some benefit, the group lessons yielded significant improvements in attention and cognition. What’s more, participants said learning the piano was enjoyable and relaxing.

“Learning a challenging new activity, such as learning a musical instrument, can increase sensorimotor activity leading to strengthened neural pathways and enhanced cognition,” says Jennifer Bugos, PhD, of the University of South Florida.

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<http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/article/piano-lessons-may-relieve-chemo-brain>