

Your Implant journey



By Grace Plant

Hi, I'm a 14 year old cochlear implant user.

I got cochlear implants when I was 12 years old, in 2023.

Before the surgery, I found that there wasn't enough information directed towards me, but there was plenty for my parents.

I decided to change this and make a leaflet for **you** so that **you** can be a part of this important decision.



So you've found out that cochlear implant surgery might help you, but you're feeling...

nervous

afraid

anxious

confused

I want to help you to feel more...

calm

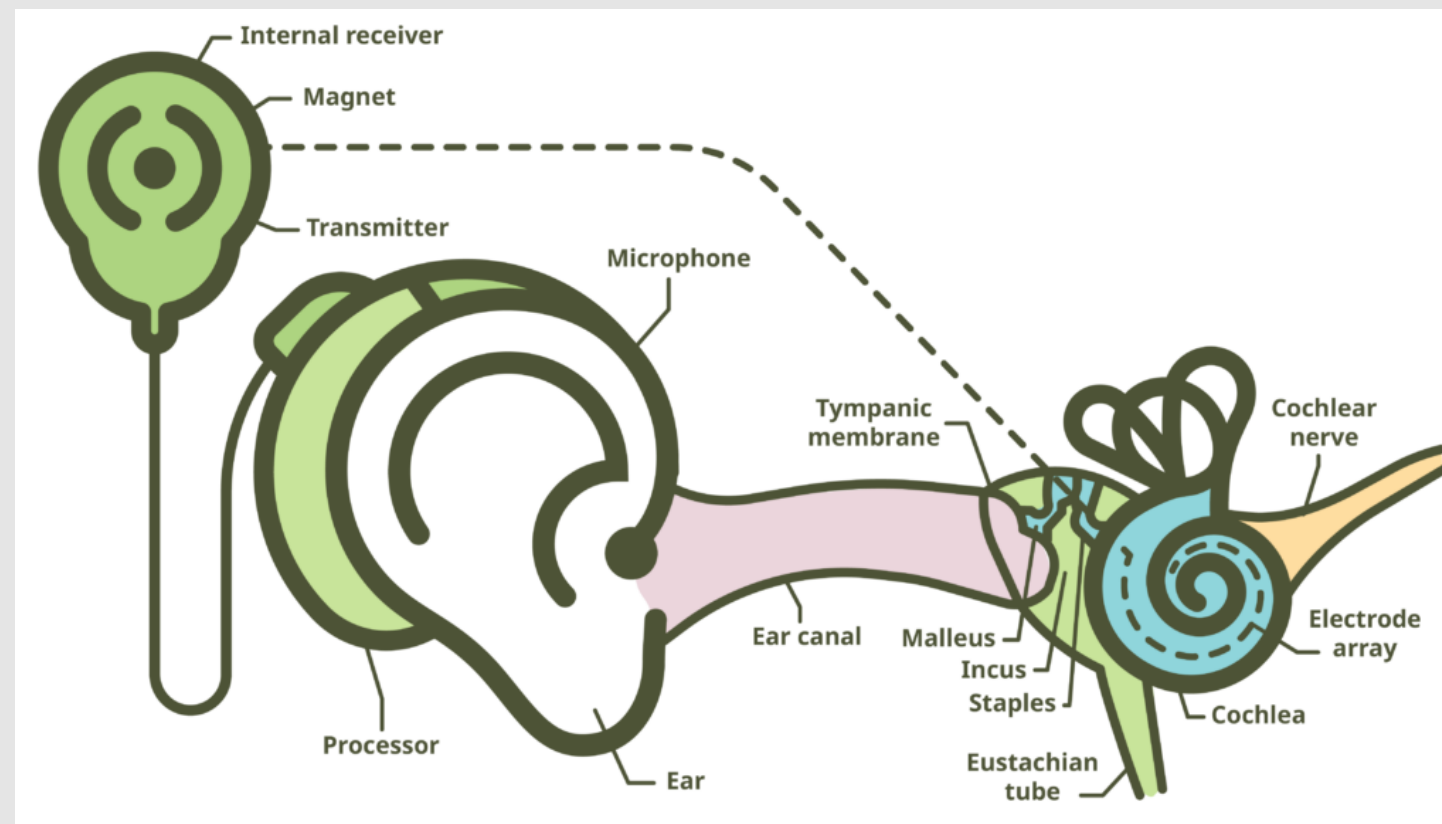
informed

prepared

involved

So, what is a cochlear implant and how does it work?

- A small hearing device for those who are severely or profoundly deaf who can't hear well with hearing aids.
- They change sounds into electrical signals, which your brain must then make sense of.
- One part is put under the skin behind your ear during an operation (the receiver).
- The other part is worn behind your ear (the processor) and uses a microphone to hear and then process speech sounds.
- This part is connected by a cable to the coil. The coil is held in place against your head by a small magnet (attracted to the magnet on the implanted receiver).
- Sounds are sent from the processor to the receiver so that your brain can make sense of the sounds.



**Don't worry, all of this will
be explained fully by
your audiologist, doctor
or teacher of the deaf.**

I had lots of questions before my surgery.
Here are some questions you may have...

How much time will I have off school?

The time you have off school will depends on a few things such as your recovery from the operation, the time it takes to have your processors switched on, how long it takes for you to get use to the sound. It is quite normal to take 2 weeks of one waiting for your switch on then one to get use to the sound.

How long do you have to avoid sports after your surgery?

You avoid sports for approximately 4 weeks which includes your sports lessons in school.

After my surgery when can I first wash my hair?

You need to wait 7 days before washing your hair to give the scars behind your ear time to heal. Also, after washing your hair u can then take of the bandage covering your scars.

Some more questions you may have...

Before my surgery what test do I have to have?

They do a series of hearing test before your decision making to decide whether your hearing levels meet the cochlear implant criteria. If you have not already had an MRI scan you will need to have one to look at your inner ear to see if a cochlear implant is the right fit for you.

What is the difference between cochlear implants and hearing aids?

Hearing aids makes sounds louder and clearer for people whose hearing levels are mild to severe. Cochlear implants don't make the sounds louder, instead they give the feeling of hearing by triggering the nerve that sends sounds to the brain. This might be better for someone with a severe or profound hearing loss.

What is the criteria for getting Cochlear Implant?

In 2019 new rules were released on who can have cochlear implants. The rules say that children with severe to profound deafness could get cochlear implants if they don't get enough sound from there hearing aids.

Timeline of the cochlear implant process

Hearing and listening tests – These determine if cochlear implants are the right fit for your hearing levels. These tests will be similar to the ones you've had before at your local audiology clinic.



MRI scan – Doctors need to see inside your head to check that there isn't any reason the implants wouldn't work (some people may have already had an MRI scan therefore they won't need another one).



Information session – If you are a suitable fit for cochlear implants you will have a session where you learn about the process, the operation, the risks, the recovery, the switch on and the rehab. You will have the opportunity to ask any questions. If you have more questions after this session you could ask your Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People to go over it all with you.



Meet your surgeon – The surgeon will check that you understand what is going to happen and answer any last-minute questions.



Surgery day – Depending on the time of your operation you will be asked to fast (meaning you can't eat or drink) for a certain number of hours before your operation. When you arrive at the hospital you will be shown to a ward and given time to get ready for the operation – you will be told what to wear. The nurses will check you over and make sure you're fit for the operation. You will need a cannula to be fitted – this will help the doctors to put you to sleep when it's time for the operation. Just before the operation starts you will move to the theatre and get ready to go to sleep. After this, you won't remember a thing!



Waking Up – After the operation you will wake up in the recovery room and be carefully monitored. You will notice a tight bandage round your head – this is important, but don't worry, you only need to wear this for a short amount of time. You will be encouraged to eat and drink soon after your operation, and given some time back on the ward to recover before you go home. Most people will go home the same day as their operation, but sometimes you might need to stay overnight.

Waiting time – You will now have a week or more to wait for your switch on. This will give you time to heal from the operation. You might notice that your hearing levels have dropped further, so it might be a quiet week for you! You should not wash your hair during that first week, and you might notice some side effects of the surgery. Some people say that food can taste like metal for a while, whilst others notice slight headaches or feeling sick. Don't worry, all of these side effects are normal and should stop soon.



Switch on – You will be invited back to the Implant Centre about a week or so after your operation. This is a very exciting day, but don't put too much pressure on yourself. You might not be able to hear everything straight away – or you might hear sounds that you've never heard before. Some sounds might sound like a robot or be very squeaky. Your processors and coil will be fitted for the first time, and you will be shown how to use your new equipment. You'll be given all of the accessories that you need for your processors and shown how to use the most important parts. When you get home, you can explore the rest of the accessories – you could ask your Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People to come and help you to explore the rest of your kit.



Programming appointments – An audiologist will decide the levels you need for your processors, but they will check that the sound is comfortable before you go home. You will be given a series of four programmes to work through. You should try to work up to the fourth programme by the time you go back for your next appointment. You might have to have several programming appointments before you reach a programme that you're happy with, and that help you to hear a full range of sounds.



Rehabilitation appointment – these are to train you to listen with your processors. the sound through your processors is very different to what you would have originally heard through your hearing aids therefore you need to go to these rehab appointments to train your brain to get use to the way everything sounds now



Annual review – once you are more confident with using your processors you will only need to visit the hospital once a year or if for any other reason you need an appointment if you have a problem you can book one.

Still got questions?

Speak to your
teacher of the
deaf

Speak to your
parents/carers

Write down your
questions for
your next
appointment

Visit the NDCS
website for
more
information

Speak to other
young people
who have been
through the
same as you

Visit the web-
site for your
local hospital