

Making the most of your cochlear implant

What should I expect to hear?

Implant teams routinely counsel people to have 'realistic expectations' about what someone may be able to hear with a cochlear implant. People with an implant will hear varying amounts of sound and speech and how much you are able to hear will depend on factors such as how long you have been deaf and what caused your deafness.

How much should I use the implant?

It is very difficult for the implant team to be able to predict how much you might hear with the implant, but we know that the more you use the device the greater the benefit. The aim is to use the implant all the time and in as many different listening situations as possible. Gradually, over the first few weeks and months, you will make steady progress. This may take more or less time than you expected and also the rate of improvement may vary. Sometimes you may make a lot of progress in a short time and other times you will feel you are not making any progress at all.

How do we monitor your cochlear implant use?

We are able to monitor how often you are wearing your processor and in what situations and also how many times the magnet may become disconnected from your head through the cochlear implant software in order to support you to maximise your use.

Cochlear implant usage is one of the most important factors for progress.

What if other people are expecting me to hear everything clearly?

Few people understand about cochlear implants. Sometimes, family members, friends or work colleagues may expect that the implant will restore your hearing to normal. Other people may or may not be interested to learn more about the cochlear implant. Either way, it may help if you arrange a meeting to show people the device and discuss how it works and what you are able to hear with it. This way, you will be able to educate them about how they can help communication between you. For example, it may still be necessary for you to be able to watch the speaker's face when someone is talking to you, or you may need people to speak a little more slowly, or help you to make telephone calls.

How can I improve what I hear with the implant?

Learning to understand the sound you hear through the implant takes time, patience and perseverance. Each person will develop their listening skills at their own pace. Over the first few weeks of implant use, as well as having the implant programmed you will have appointments with the hearing therapist for listening rehabilitation. During these rehabilitation appointments the therapist will help you to get the most out of the implant through listening practise, looking at difficult listening situations, and trying out the loop system in clinic. The rehab could also include practising on the telephone and mobile phone and help with listening to music if appropriate.

If you are concerned about the progress you are making at any stage, please talk to a member of the implant team.