

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON COCHLEAR IMPLANT – West Pole

For adults with hearing loss in both ears

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Eligibility

Is the cochlear implant only for people with profound hearing loss?

No, Several categories of hearing loss are eligible, and the selection criteria are constantly evolving. Cochlear implants remain a last resort for people for whom other solutions have not worked.

Am I too old to get a cochlear implant?

There is no maximum age for receiving a first cochlear implant, provided that the person's speech is understandable. The important thing is to meet the eligibility criteria and be able to undergo surgery.

Surgery and programming

Is the surgical procedure for a cochlear implant short?

This is a one-day surgery, without hospitalization, which requires general anesthesia. It lasts approximately 2 hours.

When will I be able to hear with my cochlear implant after surgery?

From the first day of activation, which is usually 7 days after surgery, the person can hear sounds. However, speech may lack clarity, making it difficult to understand at first.

What is the purpose of programming?

Programming your implant aims to optimize your hearing. It ensures the best possible access to all speech sounds, while ensuring hearing comfort. This will maximize the benefits of your cochlear implant.

Will I need to have my implant programmed often?

In the first year following your surgery, you will have several programming appointments to optimize your hearing. After that, it is recommended that you have an annual appointment to ensure that your adjustments are still optimal.

Intensive functional rehabilitation (IFR)

What is the purpose of intensive functional rehabilitation?

IFR aims to optimize your performance with your implant and ensure that you adapt well to this life-changing event.

How long does intensive functional rehabilitation last?

The IFR lasts 8 to 10 weeks for adults. Depending on your performance and how your situation evolves, the IFR may be shorter.

Where does intensive functional rehabilitation take place?

The IFR takes place at the rehabilitation center in your area. These centers usually have several service points. Find out where the nearest service point is and whether the service is available there.

Should I stop studying or working during intensive functional rehabilitation?

It is not mandatory to stop studying or working during IFR. However, most people choose to do so, as IFR requires a lot of energy, availability, and attention.

Will I receive psychosocial support during intensive functional rehabilitation?

Receiving a cochlear implant can present challenges in terms of adaptation and trigger a range of emotions for some people. If this is the case for you, you can access a psychosocial worker at your rehabilitation center to support you.

Benefits and limits

With a cochlear implant, will I be able to speak more clearly?

Although cochlear implants provide better hearing, it is very difficult to change the way an adult speaks.

Will the cochlear implant enable me to better control the volume of my voice?

The cochlear implant allows you to hear your own voice, which helps many people to better control its volume.

Will my dizziness be reduced with a cochlear implant?

It is impossible to predict. Some people who previously experienced dizziness stop having it after surgery, while others continue to experience it. Surgery can also cause dizziness.

Will a cochlear implant make my tinnitus go away?

It is impossible to predict. For some people, tinnitus disappears after receiving a cochlear implant. For others, tinnitus remains unchanged, and for some, tinnitus increases after implantation..

If the cochlear implant doesn't work, will I be able to put my hearing aid back in?

No, because the placement of electrodes usually destroys the cells in the inner ear. It is therefore no longer possible to use a hearing aid in the implanted ear.

Do all implant recipients wear their equipment for the rest of their lives?

Usually, yes, but for various reasons, some people choose to stop wearing their processor. They can always start wearing it again later if they wish.

Hearing quality

Will I hear the same way as with my hearing aids?

Sound with a cochlear implant is different from sound heard with a hearing aid or a normal ear. Sound may seem metallic, echoey, muffled, or high-pitched. For some, the sound is close to natural sound. Sound quality changes over time and varies from person to person.

Will a cochlear implant allow me to regain normal hearing?

No. A cochlear implant allows the wearer to hear soft sounds, but it is still more difficult for someone with a cochlear implant to understand speech than for someone with normal hearing, especially in noisy environments.

With the implant, will I still need to read lips to understand?

The ability to understand speech without lip reading varies from person to person and depending on the sound environment (e.g., presence of noise or group situations). Lip reading remains helpful for following conversations for all people who receive a cochlear implant.

With a cochlear implant, will I be able to understand people in noisy environments?

People who wear cochlear implants generally report that they have more difficulty following conversations in noisy situations than in quiet ones.

Can you hear environmental sounds with a cochlear implant?

Most people can hear soft sounds such as the ticking of a clock, birds singing, or the hum of a refrigerator with their cochlear implant.

What are the expected benefits for adults with profound congenital hearing loss and intelligible speech?

For these individuals, it is more difficult to predict the benefits that will be obtained with a cochlear implant. The benefits are likely to be more limited due to the long duration of deafness.

Social activities, leisure or work

Does a cochlear implant allow you to have a phone conversation?

Many people with cochlear implants are able to follow a telephone conversation with someone they know, but not everyone finds it equally easy.

Does a cochlear implant allow you to listen to music?

Performance varies and may change over time. Some adults enjoy what they hear when they listen to music, while for others, music sounds like a bunch of noise. Familiar songs that they already know are often easier to enjoy at first, while new songs can be more challenging.

Does a cochlear implant make it easier to hear the television and understand what is being said at the movies or the theater?

Most people continue to use a sound transmission system to their cochlear implant or closed captioning in these situations to optimize their understanding.

Can cochlear implant users swim or shower?

People with cochlear implants can shower, swim, and participate in most water sports. The external part of the implant can continue to be worn during some of these activities. For prolonged exposure to water, or to be able to go underwater, swimming accessories are available for certain models of cochlear implants.

Will I be able to play all sports with my cochlear implant?

Participation in most sports is permitted, although wearing a protective helmet may be necessary to protect the implant area. There are restrictions for activities involving pressure changes, such as scuba diving. Certain contact sports are also less recommended, such as boxing.

Will I be able to follow the conversations around the table during family dinners?

The ease with which conversations around the table can be followed depends on several factors. The use of communication strategies by the person with a cochlear implant and their conversation partners remains important in this context.

Will I be able to participate more actively in meetings at work?

The meeting environment presents several obstacles to communication. Although cochlear implants improve speech comprehension, it is still important to use communication strategies. The use of certain technical aids may also remain necessary.

Trips

Can I wear my cochlear implant when going through airport security?

Yes, you can wear your implant when passing through a metal detector or body scanner. However, it is recommended that you notify security personnel that you are wearing a cochlear implant. Be sure to carry your cochlear implant card with you. It is not recommended that you put your processor through the hand luggage scanner.

Can I wear my cochlear implant during a flight?

Yes, but you must follow the instructions regarding electronic devices during the flight.

Can I put spare parts or accessories for my implant in my carry-on luggage?

Yes. We recommend placing them in a separate pouch so that you can quickly access them when passing through security checkpoints and inform security officers that you have these items.

Are there any restrictions on international travel for people with cochlear implants?

Cochlear implants are generally accepted without any particular restrictions, but it is advisable to check with the airline or the authorities in the country you are visiting to avoid any unpleasant surprises.

What should I bring with me on the trip in regard to my cochlear implant?

Make sure you have spare batteries and a charger that you can access even if your checked luggage arrives late at your destination. You should also bring an adapter if the electrical outlets in the country you are visiting are different, your implant dehumidifier, and a spare antenna cable.

Maintenance and responsibilities

Is there any daily maintenance required?

You will need to charge your batteries and dry out your processor according to the recommended method.

Are there any costs associated with cochlear implants?

The purchase of new replacement batteries is your responsibility. Depending on your needs, you may need to make certain purchases. In addition, it is recommended that you take out insurance to cover the \$1,500 deductible in the event of loss or theft of the implant once the warranty has expired.

What happens when a part breaks?

You are responsible for taking care of your implant. If a part breaks, you will need to contact the technical support department at your programming center to obtain a replacement part.

Does a cochlear implant rust over time?

No, because the internal components are coated with a special plastic that is not rejected by the body, and the electrodes are made of a special metal that does not rust.

Varia

Do cochlear implant users often have headaches?

Cochlear implant users are no more likely to suffer from headaches than the general population.

Can I undergo imaging tests such as X-rays, CT scans, or MRIs with my cochlear implant?

It is important to inform the medical team about your cochlear implant before undergoing a medical imaging exam, as certain types of exams may not be recommended. The external processor and accessories should be removed.

Is it reasonable for a person to refuse a cochlear implant in view of future developments in inner ear cell regeneration?

Current research leads us to believe that it is unlikely that the cells of the inner ear can be sufficiently regenerated to restore functional hearing.