

Thinking About Cochlear Implants?

A guide for adults who are wondering if a cochlear implant might help.

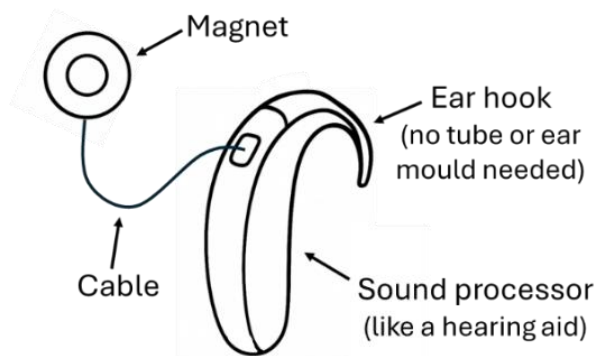
What is a cochlear implant?

A cochlear implant is a hearing device for people with **severe to profound hearing loss** who don't get enough benefit from hearing aids.

They work in a different way to hearing aids. Instead of making sounds louder, they turn **sounds into signals** that go **straight to the hearing nerve**.

A cochlear implant has two main parts:

- **Internal implant** – placed under the skin during surgery, with a fine wire (electrode) inside the inner ear, that sends signals to your hearing nerve
- **External sound processor** – worn behind the ear, like a hearing aid, with a magnet that sticks to the implant



Is a Cochlear implant the right thing for me?

You might be suitable for a cochlear implant if:

- You have a **severe or profound hearing loss in both ears**
- You **struggle to understand speech**, even with well-fitted hearing aids – especially on the phone or in group conversations.

People who get cochlear implants often say:

- **They rely less on lipreading**
- **It's easier to follow conversations**, especially one-to-one
- **They hear sounds they missed**, like birds singing, footsteps, or alarms

What happens if I want to find out more?

Being referred for a cochlear implant assessment **does not commit you** to having one. It's a chance to find out if it's right for you.

1. **First visit**

You will meet some of the cochlear implant team. They will **test your hearing** and **talk to you about your hearing problems** and what you hope to get from the implant.

2. **Further testing**

If the first visit shows a cochlear implant might be right for you, you'll be invited for **more appointments**. These may include:

- More hearing tests
- **Scans (e.g. MRI or CT)**
- **Meetings with experts** such as audiologists, rehabilitation specialists and a surgeon

3. **Making a decision**

You'll get **help to decide** if a cochlear implant is right for you.

There is no rush - you can **take your time** to decide. It is also OK to say no for now and change your mind later.

What else should I know?

- The operation is usually **straightforward** and done under **general anaesthetic** (medicine that puts you to sleep for the operation).
 - Sometimes the operation can be done under **local anaesthetic** (while you are awake). You will talk to your surgeon about what is best for you.
 - Most adults receive **one implant** on the NHS (two are offered if you are **deaf and blind**).
 - After the operation, you will need to come in for **follow-up appointments** and help to **learn to hear** with the implant – this takes time, effort, and practice.
 - Everyone's experience is different. At first, sounds may seem **strange, robotic or echoey**. This is normal. Over time, your brain learns to understand the new sound. Many people say speech becomes **clearer and more natural** with practice.
 - It can still be hard to hear in **noisy places**, but many people find listening **gets easier over time**.
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Everyday life with a cochlear implant

- **Phones and music** – Most sound processors can connect to phones, TVs, or music using Bluetooth or special accessories. Many people can make phone calls and hear music again with lots of practice.
 - **Water and weather** – They are water-resistant and most have waterproof covers. You can speak to your cochlear implant team about this.
 - **Wearing your processor** – You'll wear your processor during the day, just like a hearing aid. You take it off to shower and sleep.
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Common questions

Will I hear straight away after surgery?

No – the implant is usually **switched on 1 - 4 weeks later**, after healing.

Is it brain surgery?

No – the implant goes in the **inner ear**, not the brain.

Can I still have MRI scans?

Yes – most modern implants are **MRI-compatible**, but you must always tell the radiology team.

Can older adults have implants?

Yes – people in their **80s and 90s** have successfully had them and done very well with implants.

Find out more here:

- **British Cochlear Implant Group**

www.bcig.org.uk



- **Hear Together**

www.hearstogether.org.uk



- **National Cochlear Implant Users Association**

www.nciua.org.uk

