Cochlear implants for adults
Ear, Nose and Throat Surgery

Please read carefully before and after your surgery

What is a cochlear implant?
A cochlear implant is an electronic device designed to restore a sensation of hearing to children, young people and adults who have a severe to profound deafness. It consists of an external speech processor and an electrode array, which is surgically placed under the skin and connects to the hearing nerves in the inner ear.
What are the risks of this surgery?

This procedure is safe, but every operation has a small risk. Please discuss this with your doctor when you visit the hospital. The most common problems are:

- **Damage to teeth** - during the operation, there is a very small chance that we may chip or knock out a tooth, especially if it is loose, capped or crowned.

- **Dizziness** – you may get some dizziness and/or sickness for a few days after the operation.

- **Rarely people notice a change in their tinnitus.** It may get louder or it may disappear altogether. It will return to normal levels after a few weeks.

- **Implant breakdown:** This rarely occurs though a further operation would be necessary to replace the broken or faulty implant.

- **Facial nerve bruising:** This nerve running near the site of surgery is carefully monitored throughout the operation. This ensures that bruising or damage of the facial nerve rarely occurs.

- **If the implant has to be removed** it will not be possible to go back to using a hearing aid in that ear.

How should I prepare for this operation?

You will be given an appointment date to attend pre-assessment clinic, either on the day of your outpatient appointment or following a telephone health questionnaire. This is to ensure that you are fit enough to have the anaesthetic and the surgery.

The nurse will check your general health and may have to carry out further tests. The nurse will also give you verbal and written fasting instructions and confirm what medication you should or should not take prior to your procedure.

Prior to coming to hospital you are required to:

- **Arrange two weeks off work** (if you do lifting and carrying at work or your job requires a lot of bending and tipping of your head, you may need to take a further 1-2 weeks off work - if you require a sick certificate please ask the nurse on the day of your surgery).

- **Arrange childcare**, as children are not allowed on the ward under any circumstances.

- **Arrange an escort** (responsible adult) who will accompany you home from day surgery and stay with you overnight.

- **Arrange transport** to take you home after your surgery (either by car or taxi).

- **Bring all the medication** you are currently taking.

- **Inform the hospital** if you have a cold, flu or tonsillitis in the two weeks before admission as your operation may need to be postponed.

NOTE:

- You will only be allowed to have **1 visitor** with you on the ward.

- Make sure you have **pain killers** at home eg. Paracetamol, Ibuprofen (no aspirin). The hospital only supplies Prescription medication.

- **Avoid flying for 4 weeks.** If you have booked a holiday that involves flying please inform the hospital as soon as possible so we can book your operation accordingly.
Asking for your consent
We want to involve you in all the decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead with treatment, by law we must ask for your consent and will ask you to sign a consent form. This confirms that you agree to have the procedure and understand what it involves. Staff will explain all the risks, benefits and alternatives before they ask you to sign a consent form. If you are unsure about any aspect of your proposed treatment, please don’t hesitate to speak with a senior member of staff again.

Pregnancy testing
All sexually active women of childbearing age will need a pregnancy test. We do this to reduce the risks of miscarriage, premature birth or foetal abnormalities.

On the day of your surgery, the nurse will ask your permission to perform a pregnancy test. We will need to collect a urine specimen for this.

If there is any possibility that you might be pregnant your surgery will be cancelled.

What happens during the operation?
The surgery is performed under general anaesthetic. A small amount of hair behind the ear is shaved in an area about two inches from your hairline. The operation takes between two and five hours to complete depending on whether one ear or both ears are being implanted.

You will wake up with a large bandage on your head. This will be in place overnight. The nurse will advise you how to remove this when you are discharged. Sometimes the surgeon will put some antiseptic gauze in your ear canal, which if present should be left for a week or two to protect the wound. This will be removed at your outpatient appointment.

How long will I be in hospital?
You will go home on the day of your operation, as long as the operation is straightforward and we think that your general state of health and home circumstances are suitable. You will need to stay at least on the ward for 3-4 hours after you return from theatre.

Sometimes after your operation your doctor advises that you should stay in overnight so be prepared for your plans to change.

We discharge patients up until 22:00h.

Prevention of deep vein thrombosis (DVT)

- Please keep your white DVT stockings on for the first 24 hours after surgery to prevent blood clots.
- Although you are advised to take it easy after surgery, it is important to try and keep gently mobilizing as soon as possible.
- Keep yourself hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids.
What precautions should I take, for the next two weeks, after having a cochlear implant inserted?

- You will return from theatre with a head pressure bandage. This should be in place overnight. Should you go home with a head bandage the staff will explain how this is removed on discharge or you can follow the instructions below:

**How to remove the head bandage:**

1. Get someone to help you if you can.
2. It may make you feel a little dizzy so make sure you are sat down.
3. Slowly unravel the head bandage.
4. Remove the gauze around the ear.
5. Don’t be alarmed if some hair comes off (the doctors may have shaved the hair around the implant site).
6. Do not remove the steri-strips; keep them on until you come back to clinic. If they do fall off, don’t worry.
7. You should only be left with steri-strips at the back of your ear and a piece of cotton wool in your ear.

- **Change the cotton wool in your ear daily** - always wash your hands before and after. Take care not to remove the ear dressing with the pack - if it sticks to the cotton wool then cut it close to the cotton wool, but do not pull the dressing out

- **Keep your ear and the wound dry.** Take care when showering and washing your hair, to avoid infection. Place a piece of cotton wool covered in Vaseline in the ear to prevent water getting into the ear. Consider using a shower cap.

- **Avoid blowing your nose violently** - blow it gently from side to side. If you need to sneeze, try to do so with your mouth open.

- **Avoid all strenuous work, straining and heavy lifting for 2 weeks.** Discuss with your doctor when you can resume these activities.

- **We advise you to avoid all activities that might cause a blow to the head** eg. rugby, football and boxing as these could potentially cause damage to the implant.

- **Avoid swimming for a month.**

- **Flying should be avoided for four weeks.**

- **Avoid activities such as scuba diving** as the pressure changes involved in deep water diving could damage the implant.

- **Do not dye or perm your hair for three months.**
What is / is not normal after my operation?

NORMAL - What you may expect after surgery

- You may experience some discomfort in your ear. It is important that you take your pain killers regularly as prescribed.
- The area around the scar, including part of your ear, will be numb and sensation should be slowly return over a period of six months. In some cases sensation may never return to normal.
- You may get some dizziness and/or sickness for the next few days after the operation. When walking, always look straight ahead and keep your eyes wide open, don’t look down. If you need to bend down, bend down with your whole body. If you need to turn your head, turn your head with your whole body.
- You may feel tired for the first few days.
- It is likely that some people find their taste is impaired on one side of their tongue. This usually improves over time.
- You may have mild swelling and bruising around the ear which should settle within 2-3 weeks.

CAUTION - Please call the ward or go to your GP for advice:

- If, despite taking all your medication regularly you are still in a lot of pain, you need to ring your GP and arrange an appointment. The hospital will no longer supply medication once you have been discharged.
- If you have a temperature above 37.5°C arrange an appointment to see your GP or call the ward.
- If you notice redness, heat, bleeding or oozing around the wound site then please phone the ward.

ATTENTION - Please go to your nearest A&E in you have:

- Severe bleeding.
- Haematoma (severe swelling with collection of blood – usually dark coloured).
Where can I get more information?

NHS
Website: www.nhs.uk

ENT-UK
Website: www.entuk.org

UCLH cannot accept responsibility for information provided by external organisations.

PALS – If you have any concerns

PALS is a patient-friendly, easy to access service designed to provide a personal contact point to assist patients, relatives and carers. If you have a problem that you have not been able to sort out we can help you to resolve it.

PALS are open:
- Monday - Friday: 10:00 till 16:00
- Telephone: 020 3447 3042
- Email: uclh.pals@nhs.net

Your operation will take place at the Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital

The Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital (RNTNEH)
330 Gray’s Inn Road
London WC1X 8DA

RNTNEH is near Kings Cross Station.
There is no car parking at the hospital. Pay and display parking areas are available nearby but these are frequently full. You are advised to travel by public transport.

If you need a large print, audio, braille, easy read, age-friendly or translated copy of the document, please contact us on:

Telephone: 020 3456 5076.

We will try our best to meet your needs.