



POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR COCHLEAR IMPLANT SURGERY

Cochlear implant surgery is performed to help patients with hearing losses that cannot be effectively managed with hearing aids. Most people with cochlear implants gain the ability to understand spoken speech through enhanced lip-reading ability. Other benefits include a better perception of environmental sounds and monitoring of the volume of one's own voice.

The operation itself take around 2-3 hours, but this will vary between patients. An incision is made behind the ear so that access can be made to the middle ear through the mastoid bone, a small area of hair may need to be shaved. The implant electrode is threaded inside the cochlear with the implant receiver placed under the skin inside a well in the skull behind the ear. The incision is then closed using sutures/staples to the skin.

Recovery from cochlear implant surgery is relatively quick, with most patients staying in hospital overnight before going home. There will be a pressure dressing over the wound, with a bandage wrapped tightly around the head. This dressing may be removed by your surgeon the morning after the operation. It is important that the ear canal be kept scrupulously dry when showering (covering some cotton wool with Vaseline and then placing over the ear canal will help) and swimming should be avoided until the ear is fully healed – this can take up to 1 month. The incision sites should also be kept dry until stitches/staples are removed, and the skin has healed.

There is usually some mild-moderate discomfort after surgery. Panadol or Panadeine should be adequate for this but avoid using Aspirin. You may also experience a sense of dizziness or nausea for the first week, but if there is any severe spinning or rotations sensation, please contact your surgeon. Infection is uncommon, but if you notice any discharge, especially if it is malodourous, or if pain is worsening over time, or if you notice swelling of the incision site, you should contact your surgeon. Avoid strenuous activities and exercise over the first three weeks and you will require days off work to recover – please ask for a medical certificate if required. Also avoid nose blowing, flying and diving for 3 weeks; if you need to sneeze, you must do so with your mouth open.

Note that your cochlear implant will not begin working immediately after the operation. You will need to undergo rehabilitation with an audiologist 3-4 weeks after the operation for device stimulation.