

Frequently asked questions



What age can my child have surgery?

Cochlear implant surgery can be done as early as 6 months of age but is dependent on many factors. These include:

- the size and weight of your child
- the type of hearing loss
- other medical or surgical needs your child may have.

This can be discussed with your ENT surgeon at your next appointment.

Can I wait until they are older?

Research and clinical evidence indicate that children implanted under 2 years of age (or within 2 years of the onset of their hearing loss) have better long-term outcomes. This is because we are reducing the time of 'auditory deprivation' (the amount of time your child has limited or no access to sound). In some cases, such as borderline candidature or progressive hearing loss, you may be able to delay the surgery. These circumstances vary case-by-case and will be discussed in detail with your CHIP team prior to planning your surgery.

Why do I need to wear hearing aids if they aren't doing anything?

Even in profound hearing loss, hearing aids are important to wear before surgery as they are providing the auditory nerve with stimulation (which we know improves outcomes and progress with a cochlear implant).

It is also important that your child gets used to wearing a device on their head to help encourage their acceptance of the cochlear implant after surgery.

What happens if better cochlear implant technology comes out?

Cochlear implants have changed a lot since they were first developed in 1978. Technology has improved the appearance (e.g. they are much smaller these days) and the functionality/sound access they provide.

With current funding schemes (e.g. National Disability Insurance Scheme), your child would be eligible for processor upgrades when they are shown to improve your child's access to sound. We are hopeful that the internal implant lasts a lifetime however this is unknown as implants for babies and children is a relatively new practice.

While we are always hopeful that technology advancements will improve the aesthetics and functionality of cochlear implants, the impact of delaying intervention needs to be carefully considered. Optimising a child's access to sound is crucial for their spoken communication development. Your CHIP team will be able to discuss this in relation to your child at your upcoming appointments.

Why does my child need so many appointments?

The CHIP team requires a lot of information before a recommendation can be provided to your family. This includes comprehensive assessment from your audiologist, speech pathologist and ENT doctor. These appointments will help the team to develop a good understanding of your child's hearing loss and communication needs. It is important that you feel like you have all the information you need to make an informed decision about your child.

After surgery, your child needs to attend appointments for programming of their implant and habilitation. It takes time and work for your child to start to understand spoken language with a cochlear implant. Your team will work with you to try and make the number of appointments as family centred as possible.

Will my child get two implants or one?

This will depend on many different factors which will be discussed with you at your appointments.

How long does surgery take?

Surgery takes approximately 2-4 hours but will vary with each individual case. This will be discussed with your ENT doctor prior to surgery.

Are there any risks associated with surgery?

Will a cochlear implant stop my child from being active or engaging in swimming, running, sport etc?

There are some recommendations about activities to avoid (e.g., combat sports such as professional boxing or mixed martial arts and deep-sea diving) however most children can be active and do all the usual activities that children love to do!

Most cochlear implant processors are water resistant and there are aquatic kits available which enable your child to safely swim with their device.

Does speech sound the same to my child with an implant as it does to me?

No! It's hard for us to know what a cochlear implant sounds like however it is not natural sound. Children who have previously had normal hearing have described it as sounding different. Some children describe it sounding 'robotic' or 'squeaky'. With time, speech will start to sound normal to children who have lost their hearing and have some memory of what speech sounded like before. Babies born with profound hearing loss will not know any difference and will develop with their devices forming their own concept of "normal."



Can I meet other families who have been in a similar situation?

We would be happy to link you up with a family who has been in a similar situation to you. Many families report this can be helpful in learning about the cochlear implant journey and the impact it has on a child and the whole family. Please let us know if this is something that you would like to do.

Do we have to pay for the device or services offered by CHIP?

If you are eligible for Medicare, you will not have to pay for your services at Perth Children's Hospital.

The cochlear implant device is initially provided by Perth Children's Hospital with repairs and maintenance being funded by Hearing Australia. We recommend that all families apply to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funding for future sound processor upgrades and part replacements.

What other services should we look at in addition to CHIP?

If your child receives a cochlear implant, they will attend 12 months of Speech Pathology services at Perth Children's Hospital.

Children who have a significant hearing loss and are being considered for a cochlear implant are likely to be eligible for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funding which can be used to purchase additional services if required. It is important to start this application process early. Visit the NDIS website for further details on the application process <https://www.ndis.gov.au/applying-access-ndis/how-apply>

Your CHIP team will discuss other early intervention and Speech Pathology services that may be suitable for your child at different stages in their journey.

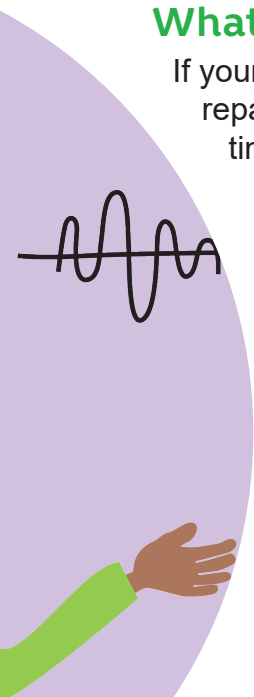
What happens if the device breaks or needs repair?

If your device breaks or isn't working, please contact your CHIP team to organise a repair or replacement. It is important that you do this as soon as possible to limit the time your child has without their device.

Where do we get spare parts for the sound processors?

You can order replacement parts from Hearing Australia:
<https://www.hearing.com.au/cochlear-replacement>

We recommend you always have a spare cable, coil and batteries.



Will my child be able to go back to wearing hearing aids if they do not like the implant or if the procedure is not successful?

Cochlear implant surgery is not reversible and will result in the loss of some or all of your child's residual hearing. This usually means they will not be able to go back to their hearing aids in the unlikely event that they reject their cochlear implant. This is carefully considered by the CHIP team prior to any recommendations being made and will be discussed with you at your appointments.

Will my child be able to hear without their sound processors?

While the ENT surgeons do try to preserve any residual hearing, it is likely that your child won't be able to hear without their sound processors on. The cochlear implant itself only works when the external sound processor is being worn.

How long do we have to wait before the devices are activated after surgery?

Your switch-on appointment is typically booked for 2 weeks after surgery so that your child has time to heal after surgery. The timing may vary depending on the individual needs and requirements of your child. Your Speech Pathologist will work with you in the lead up to surgery to ensure you are well supported within this period.

