



NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.

Helping Hand™

Health Education for Patients and Families

Cochlear Implant: Care after Surgery

A cochlear implant will be put in one or both of your child's ears. The information below will help you care for your child after their implant surgery.

What to expect

Cochlear implant surgery normally takes 1 to 2 hours for each ear. Your child will likely go home the same day. There will be a 2-inch incision (cut) behind the ear. This is where the implant is placed.

- Your child may experience the following after surgery:
 - Some swelling that should go away in a few days.
 - Trouble keeping their balance. This could happen for a week or more. It will resolve on its own.
 - Hear different noises, like cracking or popping. This is part of the healing process.
- Your child can go back to a regular diet after surgery.
- Do not let your child blow their nose for 2 weeks after surgery. Sniffing is okay.
- Around a month after surgery, you will feel a small lump where the implant is located.

Wound care

- Your child may have a head dressing (bandage). It can be removed 1 to 2 days after surgery. Check with your child's surgeon before removing. The head and hair may be washed on the second day after surgery.
- There may be a little oozing from the incision site and some dried blood. This is okay. You may gently clean around the wound with full-strength hydrogen peroxide and cotton swabs or the first 2 days after surgery if needed.
- Leave the Steri-Strip™ (adhesive Band-Aids®) over the wound until they fall off on their own. This should take several weeks after surgery.

Pain control and medicine

Most children will only have mild to moderate pain after the surgery. Older children and teenagers may have more neck and head pain.

- Your child may be prescribed medicine for pain, nausea, and dizziness.
- The provider may allow Tylenol® or Children's Advil® to help with mild pain.
- Your child may get antibiotic medicine to prevent infection. This is not always needed.

Activity

- Avoid rough or extreme physical activity, like sports, until after the follow-up visit.
- Avoid anything that might cause trauma to the head, especially near the surgical site.
- Your child may go to school within 1 week if they feel up to it.
- Playground activities are allowed 7 to 10 days after surgery with supervision.
- Swimming is allowed 2 weeks after surgery, but diving is not allowed.
- Physical education classes are not allowed for 2 weeks after surgery.

When to call the health care provider

- Your child has a fever over 101° Fahrenheit (F) or 38° Celsius (C) for more than 2 days.
- There is more than a small amount of bleeding around the incision site.
- They have severe pain that prescription medicines do not help.
- There is heavy swelling, redness, or heat behind the ear.
- Your child's face moves differently as a result of surgery.
- There is a large amount of clear, watery drainage from the ear or nose.

Follow-up

- Schedule a follow-up visit with the surgeon **1 week after the surgery** to make sure the incision site is healing and there are no problems. To schedule, call (614) 722-6536.
- Once the surgery site has healed, the external processor will be activated (turned on). This is done during an appointment with the audiologist around **2 to 3 weeks after surgery**. For questions about your audiology appointment, call (614) 722-3951.
- Your child will have a speech therapy appointment after their implant(s) is activated. If you do not have speech therapy scheduled after activation, please call (614) 722-3980.
- For questions 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., call the ENT department at (614) 722-6547. For after hours or weekends, call (614) 722-2000. Ask to speak to the ENT physician on call.