

Instructions for Care After Cochlear Implant

Congratulations on getting your child's cochlear implant! A **cochlear implant** is a small, complex electronic device that can help to provide a sense of sound to a person who is profoundly deaf or severely hard-of-hearing. The implant consists of 2 parts: an external (outside the body) part that sits behind the ear and a second part that is placed under the skin through surgery.

What are the care instructions for the area where my child had surgery?

- There will be an **incision** (cut) behind their ear that will need to heal. This cut will heal quickly over 1-2 weeks.
- There will be a dressing (bandage) over the ear. Keep this dressing on for 24 hours after the surgery.
- Under the dressing, there will be Steri-Strips™ (bandages that stick to the skin to keep small cuts closed) and some dissolvable sutures (stitches) underneath the skin. Keep the Steri-Strips™ completely dry for 48 hours after the surgery.
 - After 48 hours, it is fine to get the area wet, but do not soak or roughly scrub behind the ear.
- About 1 week after surgery, you can remove the Steri-Strips™. Use soapy water with each bath to help remove them.
- Your child's face may feel tender or swell after surgery. This will go away in the first few days after surgery.

What medications should I give my child?

- After surgery, your doctor may prescribe a week of antibiotic medications for your child to take. Take all the antibiotics as they are prescribed to prevent infection.
- You may give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (Motrin®) for pain. These medications are used for pain control, and they can be given as needed or on a set schedule (called **around-the-clock** medication). If your child needs around-the-clock medication for pain, you can give them Tylenol® and Motrin® together every 6 hours.

How will my child feel after surgery?

- The **anesthetics** (medications that prevent pain) your child was given during surgery may cause feelings of dizziness or mild nausea until they wear off.
- Your child may have temporary dry mouth, taste disturbance (not being able to taste things, or things tasting differently than normal), and numbness around their ear. These symptoms will usually go away or return to normal over time.

What kinds of activity can my child do after surgery?

Follow these recommendations for school, meals, and other activities until your child's first follow-up appointment after their surgery:

- Keep them hydrated. Encourage them to drink fluids throughout the day.
- Your child can eat soft food, fruit, and bran to help with soreness when chewing, prevent **constipation** (having few and uncomfortable bowel movements), and support their healing.
- Your child can go back to school or daycare when they feel comfortable.
- Try to avoid any build-up of pressure in the ear.
 - Tell them not to blow their nose. If they have to sneeze, they should sneeze with their mouth open.

- They should avoid any heavy lifting (lifting anything where they have to strain to lift it).
- They should also avoid bending over (where their head goes below their waist) or doing any strenuous activity (wrestling, straining to have a bowel movement, etc.).
- Talk with their pediatrician if they have constipation.
- Be careful about their activities for the month after their surgery.
 - Wait at least 2 weeks before they participate in any sports or strenuous activity.
 - Avoid any situation that may cause an injury (harm) to their head.

When should I call the clinic?

Call your doctor immediately if:

- They have facial weakness (muscles in the face feel weak or droop) that develops after surgery
- There are signs of infection such as fever, redness, swelling, or drainage (leaking fluid)
- They have increased tenderness or pain that is not helped by medication
- They continue to feel dizzy
 - Sometimes patients will have issues with balance and dizziness early after their cochlear implant surgery. In most cases, these will continue to improve over the days and weeks after surgery. Slowly going back to normal activities will help with this recovery. If they continue to have dizziness, or if symptoms increase with activity, contact your doctor.

What is the contact information for questions or concerns?

- Please contact the clinic nurse by calling (734) 936-5730. You can also use this number to schedule appointments.

- If you have an emergency on weekends or after 5:00 PM that can't wait until the next business day, call (734) 936-6267 and ask for the resident Otolaryngology doctor on call.

What kind of follow-up will my child have after surgery?

- Your child will have a video visit with a provider 7-10 days after their surgery.
- Recovery after a cochlear implant surgery involves both their surgery wound healing and the process of hearing rehabilitation. Your child will have scheduled appointments for **post-operative** (after surgery) rehabilitation at the Hearing Resource Center to get the most benefit from their cochlear implant.
- The first **activation** appointment (where they will switch your child's cochlear implant on) will be scheduled for 4-6 weeks after their surgery.

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Authors: Aurora Stienstra, RN, Elaine Turner, RN BSN, Lindsey Frasier, RN BSN
Reviewers: Marc Thorne, MD, Alexis Panches, MSN RN
Edited by: Brittany Batell, MPH MSW

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