Our Difference

Few hearing centers around the country can marshal the level of expertise and resources of the Cochlear Implant Program run by the Ear Institute at New York Eye and Ear Infirmary. As an academic teaching institution, we surround each individual—adult or child—with an experienced team of otolaryngologists, audiologists, speech-language pathologists, social workers and, in the case of children, an educational consultant. Because of the large volume of cases we handle—many of them referrals from other states and internationally—we’ve been able to assemble a team of professionals whose day-to-day focus is evaluating, treating and supporting individuals with cochlear implants. Many of our specialists are also actively involved in research and clinical trials.

We offer cochlear implants from all three of the FDA-approved implant manufacturers. Our knowledgeable professionals sit down with each cochlear implant candidate and their family members to discuss in detail the benefits of the surgery and the device. There are no age restrictions on cochlear implants. They can help infants and toddlers as well as people in their seventies and older to improve their hearing experience and increase their awareness of sounds.
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Contact us at: www.nyee.edu/earinstitute
About Hearing Loss
Hearing loss may be unilateral (occurring in only one ear) or may be bilateral (occurring in both ears). Bilateral hearing loss may be symmetrical (the same in both ears) or asymmetrical (the degree, severity and/or type of the hearing loss may be different in each ear). There are three types of hearing loss:

Conductive hearing loss results from disorders of the outer and/or middle ear. The mechanism that conducts sound from the environment to the inner ear, where it is processed into an electrical signal, is working improperly.

Sensorineural hearing loss almost always happens when the hair cells within the inner ear are not working properly. Examples include genetic hearing loss that most commonly occurs in newborn children and the hearing loss common as we all age.

Mixed hearing loss results from disorders of the outer, middle, and inner ear.

Regardless of the type of hearing loss, hearing is useful only if you can understand what you are hearing. The two key aspects to our ability to communicate are the ability to hear a sound and understand speech. The cause of hearing loss will determine whether the cochlear implant alone is sufficient or if a combination of a cochlear implant and a hearing aid is needed for optimum hearing experience.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a cochlear implant?
A cochlear implant is a small electronic device that helps to partially restore hearing to people with severe to profound hearing loss who receive only limited benefit from hearing aids. While cochlear implants do not return hearing to normal levels, the majority of people who receive them are able to hear well enough to understand speech. Most young children will be able to hear well enough to learn spoken language and to be successfully mainstreamed for school and play.

What is the process for getting a cochlear implant?
Factors include:
- Severe to profound hearing loss in both ears
- Difficulty understanding speech, even with hearing aids
- Heavy dependence on lip reading
- Severe to profound hearing loss in one ear

Who is a candidate for a cochlear implant?
A cochlear implant is not right for everyone. Factors include:
- Hearing loss that is not helped with hearing aids
- Severe to profound hearing loss in both ears
- Difficulty understanding speech, even with hearing aids
- Heavy dependence on lip reading, even with hearing aids
- Severe hearing loss in only one ear

What is the process for getting a cochlear implant?
At the Ear Institute, cochlear implant candidates undergo a medical and audiological evaluation. During a medical exam, one of our oloristopathologists will examine the anatomy of your ear to make sure there is no infection, tumor or other abnormality that would prevent a successful cochlear implantation and use. This evaluation may include an MRI or CT scan of the inner ear.

The audiologic exam includes:
- Comprehensive hearing tests with a licensed audiologist to confirm the degree of hearing loss. Once it’s determined that hearing aids are not providing sufficient benefit, cochlear implants are discussed.
- Speech-language pathologists’ evaluation to assess all aspects of a child’s ability to comprehend and formulate verbal communication.
- Educational consultation with the parents of hearing impaired children to explain how the cochlear implant works and help them secure government funded educational services and placements that are most appropriate for their child.
- Social worker will meet with patients and families of children considering implantation to answer their questions and discuss their concerns.

At the conclusion of these evaluations, members of the cochlear implant team will develop a customized plan to meet your hearing needs. If a cochlear implant is appropriate, patients and their families will meet with our team to discuss the available devices. Unlike many hearing centers, the Ear Institute offers cochlear implants from three of the FDA-approved manufacturers.

What does cochlear implant surgery involve?
Cochlear implant surgery is a same-day procedure that usually takes about two hours. The surgeon makes an incision behind the ear to gain access to the inner ear and inserts a set of tiny electrodes into the cochlea. These electrodes connect to the internal receiver, which is implanted under the skin above the ear.

The overriding goal of our surgeons during this procedure is hearing preservation. Many patients undergoing a cochlear implant surgery may still have residual hearing. By preserving some or all of your residual hearing during surgery, you may be able afterwards to use a hearing aid together with the cochlear implant in the same ear, a technique known as electrical bimodal hearing. While the cochlear implant electrically stimulates the middle and high frequencies, a hearing aid amplifies the lower frequencies. In cases of children who have already received cochlear implants, they also benefit from ongoing speech therapy.

What happens after cochlear implant surgery?
About three weeks after surgery you will be seeing your audiologist at the Ear Institute to activate and program the cochlear implant. This means customizing it to your needs based on your auditory perceptions in response to electrical stimuli.

Just as important as the surgery is the care that’s provided in the months and years that follow. That’s why we take great pride in the long-term relationships our dedicated specialists have built with patients and their families—relationships based on the confidence and trust they have in us.
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