

# General medical considerations



## Wound healing

The cochlear implant device and surgical incision have been designed to suit the skull and ear of the recipient, including children as young as a few months of age. Immediately after the operation it is necessary to maintain a firm bandage, usually for the first 24 hours. When the bandage is removed the incision is covered with steri-strips and a band aid, which are then removed seven to ten days after surgery. The stitches are absorbable and are not removed. It will then be possible to wash your hair as usual; however, you should avoid getting water in the ear canal until this is cleared by the surgeon.

## Infection

The risk of significant illness from infection in the operation site is greatest for the first six weeks after the operation. We aim to avoid infection by attending to chronic ear, nose, tonsil or adenoid disease pre-operatively.

If you think that an ear infection may be starting, please contact the Cochlear Implant Clinic immediately to discuss management options. When it is not possible to contact the Clinic, consult your local doctor or medical clinic.

Swimming can lead to ear infections, so it is recommended that swimming or surfing be avoided until the approval of the surgeon is obtained.

## Care of the skin over the implant

The transmitting coil's magnet strength should be adjusted in order to avoid damage to the skin, while maintaining proper contact. The magnet is too strong if it causes pain or discomfort, or if it leaves redness or an impression on the skin when removed. In order to avoid unnecessary pressure on the skin covering the implant, tightly fitting glasses should not be worn.

## Head injury

For adults, the trauma from a head injury would not be increased by the implant. A direct blow to the site of the implant can, however, damage the electronics package even if it does not result in a head injury. It is recommended that people wear headgear if playing contact sports (eg football) or if there is a risk of being struck by a ball (eg cricket). High risk contact sports such as boxing are not encouraged. Take care when involved in activities which may put pressure on your implant eg scuba-diving. Should a hard knock to the implant site occur, please contact the Cochlear Implant Clinic to confirm if a medical review is required.



## Discomfort or dizziness

It is important to inform the Cochlear Implant Clinic of any symptoms of discomfort, dizziness or loss of speech clarity as soon as possible.

## Issues relating to the electronic nature of the implant

It is important to inform any medical specialist you consult of the presence of your cochlear implant. As a rule, its presence will have no influence on your care; however, there are some restrictions. For example, during surgical procedures, monopolar diathermy should not be used in the immediate vicinity of the implant, and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) of the head must not be performed without consulting one of our surgeons or treating radiologist. Please refer to your *User Manual* for details of the medical procedures that are unsuitable for cochlear implant recipients. Please show your *Patient Identification Card* to medical practitioners as the information may assist them in their management of presenting symptoms.

The implant or sound processor may be detected by sensitive metal detectors such as those found at airports. Please refer to you Cochlear Ltd 'See the world your way' pamphlet, in your documentation pack, for further information.

## Warning

Under no circumstances should you try on another person's sound processor, nor give your processor to another cochlear implant recipient to try. If a person uses a processor other than one with their own map installed, they could experience extremely loud or painful sensations.

For people who have a cochlear implant in each ear, do not swap processors between ears. Each ear may react differently to electrical stimulation so you may experience very loud or painful sensations if you put the wrong sound processor on the wrong ear.

## Who to contact if you have a concern

For any concerns, please contact:

### **Cochlear Implant Clinic**

6th Floor, Smorgon Family Wing  
32 Gisborne Street  
East Melbourne VIC 3002  
Ph: 03 9929 8624

For medical concerns, please visit your local GP or Emergency Department.

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