

# Early Listening Programme for children



The Cochlear Implant Clinic Early Listening Programme is a collaboration between the families of pre-school aged children and their CIC professional. The programme is designed to assist in the education of families to promote optimal listening development through their young child's cochlear implant.

## Early Listening Programme aims

- Provide an habilitation service that will enable parents and caregivers to achieve optimal hearing device use and early development of listening and spoken communication skills for their hearing impaired children.
- Promote the parent/caregiver as the facilitator of their child's listening development.
- Provide a consistent, assessment and goal-based approach in regards to provision of services.
- Provide realistic expectations and goals that are achievable for the individual child and family.
- Ensure equal access to a programme focusing on development of listening skills for all families with a child using a cochlear implant.

## Early Listening Programme services

Individual sessions are provided by speech pathologists and audiologists for pre-school aged children and their parents. These sessions include: cochlear implant programming (Mapping), modelling of learning-to-listen techniques, information counselling, assessment of progress in the development of early communication skills and liaison with early intervention provider(s). Sessions will commence as appropriate following the initial consultation.

Cochlear implants provide hearing sensations by electrically stimulating nerve fibres within the cochlea (or inner ear). Mapping is the term given to the process of measuring the amount of electrical current delivered to the cochlea by the implant. It is the process that ensures the patient receives comfortable and useful sounds. Following cochlear implantation, a number of Mapping sessions will be arranged for your child.

While appropriate Mapping will ensure your child can **hear** sound through the cochlear implant, therapy sessions will focus on developing your child's **listening** skills. It will take time for your child to attach meaning to the sound they hear while using their cochlear implant and therapy sessions will focus on facilitating these skills.



The development of listening skills typically follows a series of stages:

1. Sound awareness
2. Associating meaning to sound
3. Discrimination of sounds
4. Auditory comprehension

Therapy sessions primarily focus on the parents' abilities to effectively promote the development of their child's listening skills, as well as speech, language and communication skills. This is initially done by demonstrating strategies for interacting with their child and progresses to the caregiver actively providing the listening/language model. Parents should expect to play an active part in therapy sessions and to gain ideas for activities to use at home.

Information counselling focuses on developing parents' abilities to manage their child's cochlear implant(s) and/or hearing aids, promoting understanding of the development processes for learning to listen and verbal communication skills and the provision of information about communication and education options.

The Early Listening Programme is a goal-based program that follows the natural development of early listening and communication skills. The type and frequency of the services provided will depend upon a child's experience using hearing aids and/or cochlear implants and their measured levels of listening and language skills. Attendance at therapy sessions will maximise your child's potential with their cochlear implant.

## **Factors that promote an optimal outcome for children using a cochlear implant**

The extent to which a child will use the auditory information provided by a cochlear implant to develop oral (spoken) speech and language skills is affected by factors the child brings to the learning environment, characteristics of the child's intervention program and characteristics of the home environment that may affect the child's learning. There is no magic formula that will result in the best outcome for an individual child. Numerous studies have attempted to identify the factors that affect speech recognition and language outcomes for children using cochlear implants. The following have been identified as having a positive influence on outcomes with a cochlear implant:

- Early identification of hearing loss.
- Younger age at implantation.
- Full time use of cochlear implants and/or hearing aids.
- Intervention programs that focus on listening and development of oral language.
- Active participation of the parents in the intervention program.



The presence of a developmental delay and/or additional disability is known to affect a child's outcome with a cochlear implant, sometimes leading to a delay in their speech and language development. Often development delay can be difficult to identify prior to a child proceeding with a cochlear implant and the effects may not be apparent until the child is older.

Our team will discuss your child's ongoing development and the appropriate intervention options available, at various stages throughout the Early Listening Programme.

## 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 the Eye and Ear Emergency Department or call 03 9929 8666.

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