



The rehabilitation programme

To help speed up the process of adjusting to the sound of your new cochlear implant, the Cochlear Implant Clinic offers recipients a two to three month rehabilitation programme. This programme involves weekly to fortnightly visits to the Clinic. These visits can include:

- optimisation of hearing by programming (mapping) the sound processor(s)
- practice listening to speech with the cochlear implant
- telephone training
- training in the use of assistive listening devices
- discussion of useful communication strategies
- assessment of progress.

The rehabilitation programme will be adapted to suit you or your child's particular communication needs as much as possible.

Tuning in to your implant

Every person when learning to listen, be it a young baby or an adult following cochlear implantation, progresses through the same stages of listening skills:

- 1. Awareness:** Sound awareness is the first stage of listening development, as a person becomes increasingly aware of varying sounds in their environment. Sounds such as footsteps, taps running, traffic noise and bird songs are some common sounds first noticed after cochlear implantation.
- 2. Differentiation:** Becoming aware of contrasting sounds within the environment is the next stage of listening development. Being able to perceive that voices sound different to background noise is an important skill to develop, even though a person may still not be able to understand the spoken word.
- 3. Identification:** Throughout the identification stage, a person begins to attach meaning to the sounds they hear. The process of identification relies heavily on information and cues gained from the environment, for example hearing a sound, then looking around and realising it is the sound of the kettle. Identification tasks may also focus on a person listening to a spoken word, and selecting the appropriate answer from a closed-set (eg multiple-choice). People will still have difficulty understanding connected/ running speech at this stage.



- 4. Recognition:** This stage focuses on the person's ability to identify sounds/words through listening alone (no multiple-choice options). The ability to understand familiar words and phrases, such as people's names, also develops throughout this stage.
- 5. Comprehension:** Comprehension tasks require the person with a cochlear implant to use listening and cognitive skills to give an interactive rather than imitative response. This involves long and short term memory as well as more complex auditory skills such as sequencing and auditory association. Difficulty can be amplified when the listening environment is noisy.

Listening and hearing tactics

How is listening different from hearing?

Hearing is the sensation of perceiving or detecting sound. You may hear something but you may not pay attention to it. When we listen to a sound we are making a conscious effort to be aware of what our ears are picking up; we are doing much more than just detecting that sound. Listening involves discriminating between different sounds, identifying what a sound may be, or trying to understand what a sound (like speech) may mean.

Both normally hearing and hearing impaired people use hearing or listening tactics naturally every day. For hearing impaired people these tactics play a more significant part in their conversations, as they often have to rely on skills other than their hearing to communicate effectively.

What are hearing tactics?

Hearing tactics are ways of enhancing communication situations to enable the listener to hear and see the speakers more clearly.

- 1. Position:** Some people may rely heavily on watching lip movements, gestures, and facial expressions as well as their hearing. So it is important that they position themselves so that they improve their chances of hearing and seeing the speaker. Keeping away from excessive background noise can also improve the chances of understanding the speaker. Using these tactics may involve planning ahead. For example:
 - If going to see a film or a play, book early to get seats near the front.
 - Have the light source shining onto the speaker's face.
 - At a restaurant, try to book a table away from noisy parties or bands and in a fairly well-lit part of the room.
 - Ask people not to cover their faces with their hands while they are speaking.
 - Avoid having important conversations in rooms where a television/radio is turned up loud.
 - When in a group, sit or stand so that everyone's face is in view.



2. Conversation: Conversational tactics are ways of controlling or clarifying the message that is being received.

- Occasionally introduce the topic of conversation as this will make it easier to anticipate what others will say.
- If there is a change of topic in the conversation, ask someone what the new topic is if you are unsure.
- Ask questions that have a limited number of possible answers such as yes/no questions.

3. Clarification: Continually saying "pardon" or "what was that?" becomes tedious and will not always help to clarify the information that is missed. A variety of tactics may have to be tried before the whole message is understood. or example:

- Repeat back to the speaker what you did hear and let them fill in the gaps.
- Ask the speaker to say the message or sentence another way.
- Ask the speaker to speak more loudly (or softly), or more clearly.
- Wait a short while before you ask for repetitions, as the message may make more sense once you have had time to think it over.
- Be sure to check any important information by repeating it back to the speaker.

4. Attitude: Good hearing tactics are only successful if you have a positive attitude.

- Remember that no-one can hear everything all the time.
- Don't worry if you miss out on individual words. Concentrate on those words you do hear and work out the gist of the conversation from them if you can.
- Don't feel discouraged or embarrassed when you make mistakes. Try to laugh at mistakes and brush them off.
- Don't be ashamed of having a hearing loss. Explain the limitations of the hearing impairment and how others can help make the communication process easier for you and themselves. People should be more understanding if they know the reason for your requests.

What are listening tactics?

Listening tactics are ways in which we can improve our ability to understand what is being said even though we may not be able to hear every word that is spoken. For example:

- Be motivated to listen, otherwise your attention may wander.
- Decide on your purpose for listening. For example, do you only need to know the general theme of the conversation, or do you need to know the details? This way, you can decide on what you want to listen to.



- Anticipate the speaker's purpose as this can clue you in to the topic of conversation.
- Try to analyse what is being said as you go along, as this can help clarify what was said earlier.
- Try not to be distracted from the speaker.

Effective use of hearing and listening tactics requires taking control of communication situations. Think about being:

1. Self-responsible:

- Realise the need for taking positive action to help yourself
- It is up to you to practise
- Accept your hearing loss may create difficulties following conversations at times and try not to blame others.

2. Assertive:

- Feel comfortable explaining one's own hearing loss and its consequences
- Confidently take the initiative to alter situations without offending others
- Enlist co-operation of others by justifying any requests you make of them.

3. Realistic:

- Don't expect to understand everything all of the time
- Realise your limitations resulting from the hearing loss.

4. Good humoured:

- Try to laugh at the mistakes you make, rather than treating them as failures, as this may also make others may feel more comfortable.

Practical tips for learning to listen with your implant

- Go around the house and familiarise yourself with the various sounds in your home (a checklist is included in the following pages that may help you keep track of which sounds you have heard).
- Read aloud from a book (or ask someone to read aloud to you) and listen to how words and different voices sound. You can also repeat back what you hear if you feel confident.
- Listen to an Audiobook (Book on CD or other electronic media) while following the text in the book. These are available to borrow from your local library or can be purchased from many book stores. Start with children's books which contain more basic and easy to follow language and progress to more complex books as you feel confident.



- Listen to the news on radio or TV (TV will allow you to lip read) and see what you can understand. The weather segment is a good place to start as the topic is familiar and there are often clues given with the pictures on the screen.
- Use the Sound and Way Beyond DVD (available to purchase from Cochlear Ltd).

As you get more comfortable with your new implant, try doing these tips without using a hearing aid or implant on the other side. Try this when at home initially, as this is your 'safe' and familiar listening environment.

Remember, effective listening will be difficult when we:

- Are not feeling well, feel tired or distracted.
- Strongly disagree with what's being said and lack motivation to listen.
- Have a hearing impairment.
- Using the phone with your cochlear implant.

Refer to the Cochlear Ltd website (www.cochlear.com.au) for a good demonstration and tips for using the phone with your cochlear implant.

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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