

Cochlear Implant: Before Your Surgery

Preparing for and thinking about a cochlear implant can be stressful.

But it can help to know more about the surgery.

Let's start by finding out how your cochlea helps with your hearing.

When sound waves enter the inner ear, the cochlea uses special nerve cells to send signals to the brain.

The brain interprets those signals as recognizable sounds, such as words or music.

Some hearing problems happen when the special nerve cells in the cochlea are missing or damaged.

A cochlear implant is a small electronic device that helps the cochlea make sound.

It won't give you normal hearing.

And, unlike hearing aids, a cochlear implant does not make sounds louder.

But it can help you better understand speech and sounds clearly.

A cochlear implant includes a microphone worn behind the ear to pick up sound, a speech processor, and the implant device.

Before the surgery, you will get medicine so you won't feel anything during the procedure.

Here's how it's done.

The doctor makes a cut, called an incision, behind your ear.

The doctor then places the device under the skin near the ear and puts tiny electrodes inside the inner ear.

The incision will leave a scar that will fade over time.

And the implant may make a small bump under the skin behind the ear.

Your hearing won't change until the implant is turned on around 3 to 6 weeks after the surgery.

Most people go home the day of the surgery or the next day.

And most people are able to go back to work and their normal routines in 1 or 2 weeks.

Before the surgery, tell your doctor about all the medicines and natural health products you take, including blood thinners.

Some can raise the risk of bleeding or cause problems with anesthesia.

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Your doctor may ask you to be up to date with your vaccinations.

They may talk to you about the pneumococcal vaccine.

That's because there is an increased risk of bacterial meningitis for people with cochlear implants.

So your doctor will want to make sure you've had the pneumococcal vaccine—or that you get it before your surgery—to lower your risk.

Your doctor will tell you which medicines to take or stop before your surgery.

And follow your doctor's directions for preparing for your surgery, including when you should stop eating and drinking.

Bring your photo ID, health insurance card, and any paperwork your hospital may have asked for.

The idea of getting a cochlear implant may be stressful.

But knowing what to expect and how to prepare can help.

And if you have any questions or concerns, you can always call your doctor.