

Cochlear Implant

What to expect

Cochlear implant surgery may be done when hearing aids have not worked well enough to improve your hearing. In this surgery, a small device is placed behind your ear and tiny wires are inserted into your inner ear.

This handout explains what to expect and how to plan for your recovery after cochlear implant surgery.

Reminder

Do not take any aspirin or aspirin-like products for 2 weeks before your operation, unless your doctor tells you to.

Hospital Stay

- Cochlear implant surgery takes from 1 to 2½ hours.
- You will stay overnight in the hospital after your surgery.

What to Expect After Your Surgery

Ear Bandage

Leave the pressure bandage in place for 48 hours after discharge. You may wear it longer if you wish. Some people like to wear the bandage for comfort while they sleep.

Incision Care

There will be some oozing from your incision. Starting 48 hours after discharge, you will need to clean your incision 2 times a day. Follow these steps:

- Wash your hands well.
- Clean your incision with hydrogen peroxide and **sterile** cotton-tipped applicators. You can buy these supplies at a drugstore.
- Then, apply an antibiotic ointment such as Neosporin to your incision with a new sterile cotton-tipped applicator.



Be sure to wash your hands well before you clean your incision.

Bathing

- You may shower and wash your hair 48 hours after discharge.
- If water gets into your ear, gently dry it with a clean towel. Then use a hair dryer set on “low” to blow-dry your ear for 10 to 15 seconds, or until your ear begins to feel warm.

Pain Medicine

You will be given medicine for pain that you will take by mouth. Most people have very little discomfort after this surgery.

Eating

- Most patients can begin to eat and drink in the evening after their surgery.
- Eat light foods that are easy to digest.
- Avoid greasy or spicy foods.

Precautions

- Do **not** use cotton-tipped applicators (Q-tips) in your ear canal.
- Do **not** have an MRI scan after surgery without talking with your surgeon about it first.



Do **NOT** blow your nose for 1 week after your surgery.

Activity

- Do **not** bend over or move quickly.
- You may resume light daily activities 2 to 3 days after surgery.
- It is OK to do light stretching and easy workouts.
- Do **not** hold your breath when you exercise.
- Do **not** jog or do strenuous workouts for 1 week.
- Do **not** blow your nose for 1 week after surgery.
- Sneeze with your mouth wide open for 1 week after surgery.
- You may resume all activities 1 week after surgery.

Return to Work

You may return to light work when you feel strong enough and do not feel dizzy. Most patients return to work 7 to 10 days after surgery, after their stitches or staples are removed.

Follow-up Visits

You will need to make an appointment for your staples or stitches to be removed. This appointment should be 7 to 10 days after your surgery. Call 206-598-7519 if you do not already have your appointment set up.

When to Call the Clinic Nurse or Doctor on Call

Call the clinic nurse or doctor on call if you have:

- Fever higher than 101.5°F (38.6°C)
- Severe ear pain that does not go away after you take your pain medicine
- Drainage from your ear
- Severe *vertigo* (feeling dizzy)
- Bleeding that does not stop when you apply pressure
- Nausea or vomiting that will not stop
- Concerns that cannot wait until your follow-up visit

Notes and Questions

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

**UWMC Otolaryngology –
Otology and Audiology:
206-598-7519**

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206-598-6190 and ask for the Otolaryngology Resident on call to be paged.