

Care After Cochlear Implant Surgery

What to expect after cochlear implant surgery and how to care for your child at home.

What is done during cochlear implant surgery?

We will give your child medicine so they are fully asleep for the procedure. We will place a small device called the cochlear implant in the skull behind their ear. We will also insert a tiny wire into their inner ear. The surgery takes about 3 hours for one side. Some children need to stay overnight in the hospital but others can go home the same day. The surgeon will discuss this with you before scheduling the surgery.

How do I care for my child at home after surgery?

Dressings

Your child will have a bandage over their ear after their surgery.

If your child was sent home with a bandage, keep it on for 2 to 3 days.

If your child was sent home with a headband, please use for one week, and remove as needed for incision care and bathing. Your child may wear it longer for comfort while they sleep.

Incision care

It is normal to see some oozing from your child's incision. The day you leave the hospital, start to clean the incision.

- Wash your hands well
 - Apply an antibiotic (bacitracin) to the incision with a new clean cotton swab.
 - Do this 2 times each day for 1 week.
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Eating and drinking

- Your child should be able to begin to eat and drink the evening after their surgery.
 - Offer them light foods that are easy to digest.
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Pain and comfort

- We partner with you and your child to prevent and relieve pain as completely as possible. You know your child best. No matter the level of your child's pain, believe they are hurting and respond right away. Most people have very little discomfort after this surgery.
 - You will be given medicine for your child's pain.
 - Check with your healthcare provider first before giving any other type of medicine to your child.
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To Learn More

- Otolaryngology
206-987-2105
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

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Activity

- Your child may go back to light daily activity 2 to 3 days after their surgery.
- No school or day care for 1 week.
- No sports or PE class for 2 weeks.

Bathing

- Please do not bathe, shower or wash your child's hair for 2 days after leaving the hospital.

When should I call the doctor?

Call the clinic or doctor if your child has:

- A temperature greater than 101°F
- Excessive ear pain
- Drainage from their ear if your child does not have ear tubes
- Vertigo (dizziness) lasting longer than 3 weeks after surgery
- Bleeding that does not stop with a pressure bandage
- Excessive pain that does not go away with pain medicine
- Nausea or vomiting that does not go away

Who do I call if I have questions?

Call the Otolaryngology department at 206-987-2105 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. For questions after hours, weekends or holidays, call 206-987-2000, and ask the operator to page the Otolaryngology doctor on call.