



# Cochlear Implants: Am I Ready for a Cochlear Implant?

## Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons

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“Is it time for me to consider a cochlear implant?” This is a common question asked by people with a hearing loss, especially those who have a progressive loss. Not everyone with hearing loss is a candidate for an implant. We are all different, our hearing loss being due to various causes, and unique in our lifestyles and approaches to living with hearing loss.

### To Qualify for a Cochlear Implant

1. The loss has to be severe enough that the best hearing aids on the market can no longer give you any benefit.
2. A test of your hearing must show that the loss is in the “severe” or “profound” category in both ears, not just one ear.
  - Profound deafness is defined as a loss greater than 90 dB.
  - Severe deafness is between 71 and 90 dB.
  - If you are an adult, you may have either severe or profound hearing loss.
  - A child must be at least 12 months old, with profound hearing loss in both ears.
3. You must score 30% correct or less in sentence-recognition testing with optimally fitted hearing aids.

Once the above criteria are met, ask yourself these questions to assist in making your decision:

### Lifestyle

*Do I want to communicate with and live among people with normal hearing or is my lifestyle one in which the world of sound has little meaning for me?*

Think about how important it is to you to be able to hear better. Consider how your hearing loss affects how you live and your relationships with your family, friends and co-workers. Also think about how motivated you are to hear better and whether you feel a genuine desire to hear better.



## General physical health

*Am I able to go through surgery in order to improve my hearing?*

Any surgical procedure is stressful, and only your doctor can determine whether you are in good enough health to go through cochlear implant surgery. There must be no medical contraindications.

## Insurance coverage

*Will my health insurance cover the cost of a cochlear implant?*

The cost is roughly \$70,000 in the U.S. You do not want to be left holding the bag in case of insurance denial.

## History of hearing loss

*How will my history of deafness affect my ability to hear with an implant?*

People with a history of recent onset deafness will do much better with a cochlear implant than adults who have been deaf since birth. Also, those who have been deaf since birth but have worn hearing aids are likely to perform better than those who never wore hearing aids.

## Motivation to learn with an Implant

*Do I have the time, patience and desire to adjust to hearing with an implant?*

Some people are able to benefit very quickly from a cochlear implant, while others take a long time to obtain some degree of benefit. Each implant user has different goals they wish to achieve, and each defines "success" differently. Success for one user may seem like a failure to another. Learning to hear with an implant varies enormously, and you may need to spend some time learning through listening therapy, auditory rehabilitation or simply hearing. A new implant user should be well motivated to develop listening skills and also have a good support system to draw upon for help with learning to hear – spouses, family, friends, neighbors and co-workers all can help in this process. It is very important that the immediate family be supportive of the new implant user.

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