



# > COCHLEAR IMPLANTS IN THE CLASSROOM: A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

FACTS ABOUT DEAFNESS

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HAVING A STUDENT WITH A COCHLEAR IMPLANT IN YOUR CLASSROOM MAY FEEL LIKE A NEW EXPERIENCE, ESPECIALLY IF YOU'VE NEVER ENCOUNTERED ONE BEFORE. UNDERSTANDING WHAT COCHLEAR IMPLANTS ARE AND HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR STUDENT WHO WEARS ONE CAN HELP ENSURE A POSITIVE CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYONE

## WHAT IS A COCHLEAR IMPLANT?

A cochlear implant is a specialized hearing device that helps individuals with severe hearing loss hear by bypassing the damaged parts of the inner ear. Unlike hearing aids, which simply amplify sound, cochlear implants convert sound into electrical signals that stimulate the auditory nerve, allowing the brain to interpret them as sound.

Cochlear implants are commonly used in children with profound hearing loss. While they do not restore "normal" hearing, they improve the ability to hear and can significantly support the development of listening and speaking skills.

### **Cochlear implants have two main components:**

An internal device surgically implanted into the ear.

An external sound processor that is worn behind the ear, much like a hearing aid.

## HOW DO COCHLEAR IMPLANTS WORK?

**The cochlear implant works by converting sound waves into electrical signals that the brain can understand. Here's how it works:**

**SOUND CAPTURE:** A microphone behind the ear captures sound from the environment.

**SOUND PROCESSING:** The sound is sent to the sound processor, which converts it into a digital signal.

**SIGNAL TRANSMISSION:** The digital signal is transmitted to a coil worn over the implant, which sends the signal to the internal device.

**Stimulation:** The internal device converts the signal into electrical impulses and sends them to the inner ear, stimulating the auditory nerve to send signals to the brain, which interprets them as sound.

## HOW TO SUPPORT A STUDENT WITH A COCHLEAR IMPLANT

While you won't need to manage the device's technical care, understanding a few basics can help you support the student's hearing and communication needs.

### **CARING FOR THE SOUND PROCESSOR:**

**Keep it Dry:** The sound processor should not get wet, so it should be kept away from water sources (e.g., rain, swimming pools). If it gets wet, it must be dried using a special drying unit. Ask the child's family which one they use.

**KEEP IT CLEAN:** Encourage the child to keep the sound processor clean. Be mindful of hairspray or other products that may damage it. If it needs cleaning, use a dry, non-abrasive cloth with clean, dry hands.

**AVOID INTENSE ACTIVITY:** The sound processor should be removed during vigorous activities like sports. If the child is in such an activity, a safety line (a thin, clip-on cord) should be used to secure the processor to their clothing, preventing it from being lost.

### **CLASSROOM ADJUSTMENTS:**

**Signal for Dislodged Devices:** It's helpful to agree on a simple signal (e.g., a hand raise or tap) in case the device is knocked off or dislodged, especially during recess or playtime.

A direct blow to the implant can cause damage, so in activities where there's a risk of head impact (e.g., contact sports), wearing a helmet is recommended.

**BATTERIES:** Make sure the student's device has fresh batteries. It's helpful to have spare batteries available in case they run out during the day.

## UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION:

**POSITIONING:** Make sure to face the student when speaking, especially if they rely on lip-reading or visual cues.

**ROOM ACOUSTICS:** Minimize background noise whenever possible, as it can make it harder for the student to hear and understand you, even with the cochlear implant.

**USE CLEAR SPEECH:** Speak clearly, at a normal pace, and ensure you are in the student's line of sight when addressing them.

## A HELPFUL TIP

Cochlear Implant Awareness: While students with cochlear implants may be able to hear, the device doesn't restore perfect hearing, and they may have difficulty in noisy environments. Being patient and providing additional support, such as written instructions or visual cues, can help.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Australia is a global leader in cochlear implantation, with about 90% of children who could benefit from cochlear implants receiving them. This pioneering work has made a significant difference in the lives of many children with hearing loss.

By understanding the basics of cochlear implants and how to support your student, you play a crucial role in helping them thrive in the classroom!

For further information about  
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