

# NextSense Cochlear Implant Services FAQs for clients

## 1. Could a cochlear implant help me?

If you use hearing aids but still have difficulty hearing on the telephone, or if you regularly ask for repeats during everyday conversation, a cochlear implant may be a good next step for you. Your audiologist can do some simple tests to determine whether a cochlear implant may be able to offer you better audibility and clarity of sound compared to hearing aids.

## 2. What is the difference between cochlear implants and hearing aids?

Hearing aids provide precisely amplified sound into the wearer's ear so that it can be heard when natural hearing is impaired. However, hearing aids may reach their limit when the damage is too great. Cochlear implants bypass damaged structures in the inner ear or 'cochlea' and stimulate the hearing nerves directly.

Cochlear implants have an external component called a speech processor, which looks like a hearing aid. This is worn behind the ear, or on the side of the head. Unlike hearing aids, the speech processor uses a radio signal to send information through the skin to the 'implant' which is surgically placed under the skin. The implanted component stimulates the hearing nerves and allows the brain to receive sound.

## 3. What does a cochlear implant cost?

NextSense bulk bills for all in-clinic audiological services before and after surgery so you won't be out of pocket for your regular appointments. Hearing Australia clients and NDIS participants should be eligible to obtain batteries, cochlear implant maintenance and repair, and some assistive listening devices.

Surgery is available through Medicare and private health insurance. If you have a private health insurance (hospital) policy covering implanted hearing devices, the cochlear implant system may be fully reimbursed. Coverage of the surgical procedure and hospital costs will depend on your level of cover. For those eligible, DVA may also cover the costs of the implant. Cochlear implant costs can also be privately funded.

## 4. How long is the wait for surgery?

Surgical waiting lists can vary but are usually between 6-12 months for public patients and considerably shorter for private patients.

## 5. Am I too old for a cochlear implant?

Cochlear implants can help people of any age to improve their hearing and quality of life. Babies a few months old, up to people in their 90s and beyond have benefited from cochlear implant technology.



## 6. What does a cochlear implant sound like?

Everyone's initial experience with a cochlear implant is unique as they have not heard in this way before. Many cochlear implant users describe the sound as being quite different from their hearing aids, especially at first. This changes over time and most users say it gets better every day. NextSense will provide support for you with regular appointments early on as you adjust to this new way of hearing and continue your care with annual check-ups and appointments on request.

## 7. I'm nervous about surgery. Is it risky?

Before you make your choice about cochlear implant surgery, your expert medical and clinical team at NextSense will fully inform you of the risks and precautions and will advise if there are any issues that particularly apply to your own medical circumstances.

The surgery itself takes approximately one hour under general anaesthetic. Your surgeon makes a small incision behind your ear, places the implant under your skin, and inserts the electrode array into your inner ear. Tests are run to ensure the implant is working.

Most clients spend one night in hospital and are able to return to work and normal activities within about one week of their operation. This is around the time they have their implants activated or 'switched on' for the first time.

## 8. Should I wait for new technology or stem cell research advances?

If you could benefit from a cochlear implant, the sooner you receive it the better. There is a great deal of evidence to show that the longer a person spends with very poor hearing, the more negative impacts they experience as a result of their hearing loss. The effects of living with significant hearing loss can include social isolation, emotional impacts, withdrawal from once-enjoyable activities and potential cognitive decline. We also know that people who receive cochlear implants earlier often make progress in benefiting from their implants.


Getting a cochlear implant now will not exclude you from benefiting from future sound processing technology. Most sound processors are now designed to allow you to benefit from future upgrades, without the need for additional surgery.

## 9. Do I need cochlear implants in both ears?


While some people do go on to receive a cochlear implant in each ear, most use one cochlear implant and continue to use their hearing aid in the opposite ear. This can give the 'best of both worlds' with the natural acoustic tone of the hearing aid combined with better access to soft, crisp speech sounds provided by the cochlear implant. Wearing both is proven to give better understanding of speech, especially in noise, better determination of where sounds are coming from, and better sound appreciation for music benefit.

NextSense is the registered business name of Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (ABN 53 443 272 865)

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