

Hearing & Amplification

Cochlear Implants

Is My Baby A Candidate For A Cochlear Implant?

The criteria for determining who can benefit from cochlear implants have changed a great deal since the devices were first introduced. Currently, cochlear implants are approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for children 12 months of age and older.

Criteria for Cochlear Implantation in Children:

- In general, it is recommended that a child be appropriately fit with hearing aids and use them for 3-6 months before determining implant candidacy.

In cases of meningitis, a shorter hearing aid trial may be recommended or the trial may be waived as bony growth in the cochlea following meningitis may create problems for implantation. In a few cases of meningitis, the physician may proceed with implantation prior to the child reaching 12 months of age. This is to insure adequate insertion of the electrodes into the cochlea, before the bony growth fills the cochlea.

- Degree of hearing loss

Children between 12 months and 18 months of age: Profound, sensorineural hearing loss of 90 decibels or greater in both ears

Children 18 months of age and older: Severe-to-profound sensorineural hearing loss of 70 decibels or greater in both ears

- Lack of benefit from appropriately set hearing aids
Examples of this would include:
 - ~ Inconsistent response to his/her name in quiet
 - ~ Failure to alert to environmental sounds while wearing amplification
- No medical contraindications
Included in the list of contraindications are things such as an absence of the auditory nerve; medical conditions or developmental delays that would severely limit participation in aural habilitation; and active middle ear infections.
- Children should be in a rehabilitative or educational setting where the development of auditory (listening and speaking) skills is emphasized. Rehabilitative or educational environments that encourage auditory skill development are likely to have a positive effect on the speech and language progress in children.
- High motivation, positive family environment, and realistic expectations are all important factors in a child's performance with the cochlear implant.