

Module 5: Cochlear Implants: The Basics

Section: Factors for Positive Outcomes

Factors for Positive Outcomes

- Child's age at the time of implantation (duration of deafness)
- Child's language foundation prior to implantation
- Presence of certain medical issues
- Family's access to habilitative health care resources

Activity 5.4: Guiding Families in Understanding What is Involved in Promoting Positive Outcomes

A. Review the many factors that may impact outcomes with a cochlear implant. Include factors that are related to the:

- child (e.g., age when the child became deaf, age of implantation, hearing levels that progressively declined),
- environment (e.g., Does the home provide a rich, accessible language environment?), and/or
- technology (e.g., Does the child consistently wear a properly maintained cochlear implant?).

For more information about factors impacting outcomes: [Performance Outcomes from Cochlear Implants: Navigating a Forest of Information...One Tree at a Time.](#)

B. Discuss family expectations from a cochlear implant. Having appropriate short- and long-term expectations is important to facilitating positive outcomes.

- Families often mention that they want their child to learn to talk as they have heard about the outcomes of children demonstrating high levels of listening and spoken language competence. Discuss how this goal fits with their child's current developmental pathway.
- Discuss other possible realistic outcomes besides "learning to talk." A few ideas include:

- safety,
 - sound awareness,
 - increased understanding of spoken language while also using sign language in the child's language acquisition (e.g., facilitating development of both American Sign Language and spoken English, using strategies that include sign to clarify spoken English),
 - use of spoken language for some activities (e.g., social interactions, highly contextual listening), and
 - music appreciation.
- C. Assist the family in connecting with other families and/or professionals in your region to discuss their journey in identifying realistic listening and spoken language goals and facilitating listening and spoken language skills.
- D. Discuss the role of family members, early interventionists, audiologists, and listening and spoken language specialists on the child's journey of learning to listen and use spoken language. Reinforce the concept that the implant helps the child to hear but it is people who help the child learn to listen.
- E. Invite the family to navigate the website of their chosen manufacturer, as well as other manufacturers, to find helpful habilitation materials. Cochlear implant companies create materials and guides for recipients of their products that are useful and not device specific. For links to these resources and more, see the section on [Listening on the website, Cochlear Implants: Navigating a Forest of Information ... One Tree at a Time.](#)
- F. Families may receive therapy or coaching to support their child's listening and spoken language development from a speech-language pathologist trained in working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing, an aural rehabilitation specialist, or a certified listening and spoken language specialist. Obtain permission from the family to communicate with this specialist so you can support their goals.
- G. Demonstrate and coach families in techniques to facilitate their child's listening and spoken language development. If the child/family receives listening and spoken language support from an outside therapist, try to utilize/reinforce/practice similar techniques and strategies. If not, identify an activity that is age-appropriate as well as appropriate to the child's listening skills and goals. You can refer to the habilitation websites mentioned above for ideas and suggestions. If you are not clear on how to support the family in this manner, try to connect with specialists in your region who can guide you.

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