



## **A Word About Cochlear Implants**

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A cochlear implant is a surgically implanted under the ear of a person with a profound hearing impairment in order to make sounds known to the person. The implant does not create hearing in the same way as a person without a hearing impairment hears. What do we mean by this? What we mean is that a cochlear implant does not perfect hearing.

Most people with a cochlear implant will be able to discern sounds like a bird singing or a car horn blasting. Some people with a cochlear can use an ordinary telephone but others cannot.

Many people use sound clues from the implant together with lip reading and other facial cues to achieve understanding but it is not but it is not what we think of as “normal” hearing.

The sounds through an implant have been described as artificial or “robot” like. Generally speaking the rules for communicating with a person who has a cochlear implant are the same as for communicating with anyone who has impaired hearing, that is, face the person, make your lips and facial expressions clear to the person and not obstructed, and ask if you are being understood using open-ended language wherever possible (What gate are you going to? Versus Are you going to gate 7?). Confirm that communication is correct when it’s an important matter like an airline gate by repeating until you’re sure everyone is clear about the necessary information.

Don’t ever hesitate to ask a person to repeat herself. Do not pretend you understand if you do not. Remember a person with a cochlear implant is out in the world all the time making herself understood and she will help you understand her too so don’t worry, relax, pay attention and take your time. It will be fine!