

Music Tips for Adults

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Music Tips for Adults

The development of cochlear implants (CIs) over the past 30 or so years, has meant that many people with profound hearing loss are now able to understand speech with relative ease. The majority of adults with CIs are able to communicate easily and effectively one-on-one and in small groups, and some can communicate on the phone. Most adult CI users report that speech sounds clear and natural to them, but some report that music sounds different from what they remember.

This brochure is designed to help you, the CI recipient, to once again enjoy listening to music. There is no magic formula, or even a hard and fast set of rules to follow, but there are some tips that should help you enjoy music more.





Start With the Familiar

Can you think of a song that you know very well, a song that is so familiar you can *hear it in your head* if you stop and concentrate? Often such songs are from our teenage years when we had the ability to easily remember the words and tunes of many songs.

The next step is to find a recording of that particular song. If you don't have a copy but do have access to the Internet, you can go to YouTube and see if it's there. Alternatively, you might be able to find it on iTunes, Google Play, Spotify or whatever apps you use on your phone to access music.

Sit down in a quiet place and listen to your chosen song a few times. How does it sound? Is it how you remember it? Perhaps even more importantly, do you like it? You might try to experiment with the volume to see if it has any effect on the sound quality. Your music listening experience may improve with practice. A little perseverance at first can have long-term benefits. If you have any difficulty following the lyrics, try to get a copy of them. YouTube has the advantage that some songs have the lyrics displayed as the song plays. You can also try finding the lyrics through an internet search, using a search engine such as Google or Baidu.

Keep it Simple

At first, try to limit your choices to pieces of music that have fairly simple arrangements and a single, clear, well-defined voice. Many cochlear implant recipients report that the early songs of Johnny Cash, such as "I Walk the Line" and "Ring of Fire" sound very natural and are easy to follow. The characteristics of these songs that may make them suitable for early listening with a CI include a limited number of instruments (quite often only guitar and percussion), a clearly defined rhythm, Cash's baritone voice, and a singing style which closely resembles speech.

If you prefer instrumental music, try to find familiar pieces that feature either a solo instrument or a small number of instruments. Again, YouTube is a good place to search. Type in a simple description of what you would like to hear (e.g., *piano solo, piano and violin, guitar solo*), and see what's available. Are there any familiar pieces? Are there music styles that you like, such as bluegrass, string bands, and indie rock? If so, type in that name and see what you get.

Music is enjoyed by many people who use cochlear implants.

Playing Favorites

You might like to see what clips YouTube has of your favorite performers. It doesn't matter whether it's Elvis Presley, Adele, or Drake, you'll probably find them there.

Look at the range of available songs and choose the ones you like best. Some clips will include lyrics, which can be a big help in following the song.

*Our MED-EL Music Specialist
has compiled a Playlist
for those beginning
to listen to music with their CI.*

You can find it on  Spotify



To access the list, visit the music streaming site Spotify and login or create a free account. Under Search, enter *MED-EL Music for Cochlear Implants*. Listeners can then follow MED-EL and start enjoying the music.

Equipment

If you have access to it, good quality equipment provides the best listening experience. Don't go out and buy new equipment, however, before testing what you already have available. If the sound quality doesn't seem to be acceptable, ask a friend or family member with typical hearing for their opinion. How does it sound to them? If they think the quality is unacceptable, try listening with some other equipment, or consider buying a better system. Your phone may be a good source for your music listening, using headphones positioned over the microphone(s) of your audio processor(s), or direct audio input via an Assistive Listening Device.

For more information on Assistive Listening Devices which may help, contact your audiologist or MED-EL representative.

If you are listening via your computer, be aware that the sound quality of built-in speakers is sometimes quite poor. Make sure you use a good quality set of external speakers, plug in a set of headphones, or use direct audio input via an Assistive Listening Device. Again, it's a good idea to have a family member or friend check the sound to make sure it's acceptable.





Auditory-visual

One of the great advantages of YouTube material is that it offers the opportunity to not only hear music, but to see it being played as well. We know that vision (speechreading) is important in speech understanding, and it can also help provide better access to music. Being able to see a singer's lips move makes it easier to follow the song which, in turn, makes the listening situation a little easier. Similarly, watching a pianist's hands on the keyboard can also support listeners by providing cues that allow better access to the music.

Listening Environment

Stop and ask yourself the following question, "When is speech easiest to understand?" The answer for the vast majority of cochlear implant recipients is, "in a quiet, non-reverberant listening environment." The same applies for music. You'll have the best opportunity to enjoy musical listening if you avoid rooms with background noise or too much reverberation.

Music Performance

Have you ever played an instrument or loved to sing? You don't have to be a professional to enjoy making music, and it may provide you with experience that helps you become a better music listener.

Experiment with your instrument you may have stored away, and see how it sounds now with your CI. Try different intervals and scales in various octaves, or play a piece so familiar you can play it in your sleep. Maybe you want to consider taking lessons again. Start singing anew the songs you like. If you want to practice matching the pitch during singing, then you could use a platform like SingStar or Lips, which provide you visual feedback of the melody you're singing compared to the original that is being played.

Don't forget that some songs might be naturally out of your vocal range. Once you feel comfortable, it can be a fun group activity. Maybe you are more about rhythm. Play along with a song by tapping or clapping different rhythmical patterns, or explore one of the rhythmical games which are, for example, available through various apps.

If family members or friends play an instrument, see if they would play some simple tunes for you. It's a great possibility to experience other instruments closely. If you know what's being played and can see it happening, it might help you to hear it better. Additionally, experiencing live music is filled with positive emotions because we experience it with others.





"I Don't Like That!"

Don't expect to like everything that you hear, especially when you first start listening to music more regularly. We all have musical likes and dislikes, and it's unreasonable to expect that everything will sound good. Find music that you like and listen to it, and then gradually expand your range of listening. It might take time, but it'll be worth the effort.

Practice, Practice, Practice!

Practice is the key to better music listening. The more you practice listening to music, the better it's going to sound. Perseverance and practice are the keys to better listening skills.

Some Useful Music Resources



The **Munich Music Questionnaire** is a validated questionnaire which assesses the music listening habits of people with post-lingual hearing loss. It offers useful information to clinicians about the role of music in the hearing implant recipient's life pre- or post-implantation.

Tips for Music Listening

Keep these tips handy to help you fully realize your music listening potential.

- 1 Make sure the sound quality is good. If in doubt, check with a typically hearing friend or family member.
- 2 Choose a comfortable environment (quiet, relaxing, no echo).
- 3 Use headphones or direct audio input via an Assistive Listening Device.
- 4 Start with a simple piece (a solo piece with lots of repetition is ideal). You might look on the internet by typing *piano solo* or *guitar solo* into your search engine.
- 5 Select something familiar. Music you listened to when you were younger can be easier to understand as your memory helps fill in the gaps.
- 6 Find music with a strong beat (rock, hip-hop, etc.).
- 7 Use visual cues—watch live music or video clips in which you can see the music being played or sung.
- 8 Find the lyrics—type the title and *lyrics* into a search engine or try to find a performance of the song or instrumental piece that displays the lyrics on YouTube.
- 9 Talk with other cochlear implant recipients, or seek guidance from a hearing rehabilitation specialist or your audiologist to assist with your progress.

When you are ready for more...

- 10 Broaden your musical tastes (classical, pop, country, rock, folk, etc.).
- 11 Use trial and error by sampling different styles and practice identifying sounds and instruments.
- 12 Learn to play an instrument, join a community chorus or church choir, or take music therapy.
- 13 Have fun and don't give up!



Bravo!

As you practice and become more comfortable listening to music, your expectations will change. Congratulations on working hard to achieve the most from listening with your cochlear implant!



For Further Reading

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91% of our users reported that listening to music was a pleasant experience.¹

¹ FS1 clinical investigation: final report (CRD2005CIP001), MED-EL Innsbruck, March 2007
These results were reported by experienced users after less than 3 months of using of Fine Structure Processing (FSP).

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