



Safety Considerations for Cochlear Implant Users

Until recently, BCIG (British Cochlear Implant Group) provided a comprehensive set of safety guidelines. They have withdrawn them but as soon as the updated guidance, in liaison with the CI manufacturers, is available we will inform you. Meanwhile, CI users should be aware of the following safety issues.

1 – Manufacturers' advice

Please refer to the manuals provided by the manufacturer of your device. These may contain advice specific to your device on matters such as water resistance and procedures at airport security. The manufacturer's information can be found at:

Advanced Bionics: www.advancedbionics.com Tel: 01223 847888

Cochlear: www.cochlear.com Tel: 01932 871500

Medel: www.medel.com/uk/medical-procedures Tel: 01226 242874

2 – Sports

We do not recommend activities that carry a high risk of impact to the implant, but accept that it is not possible to quantify that risk, and that you will have to make your own judgement about a sensible balance of risks and benefits. We expect you to exercise reasonable care and you should not assume that a broken external processor will automatically be replaced free of charge. Damage to the internal device may require surgery to replace it. If you do choose to undertake contact sports the external processor should be removed and a well-fitted helmet or scrum cap can be worn to reduce risk to the internal device.

For water sports, the external processor should be removed or secured in a waterproof manner: please contact the manufacturer of your device for specific advice.

Scuba diving can be undertaken by some patients, but you must contact us for advice first.

3 – Infections

Any suspected infection in your ear or around the device requires immediate medical attention. Please ensure that we are informed as soon as possible.

Advice on meningitis and immunisations is available here

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/vaccinations/Pages/when-is-pneumococcal-vaccine-needed.aspx>

4 – Surgery

Surgery on any part of your body below your neck is unlikely to have any effect on your implant but you should inform your surgeon that you have a cochlear implant. If you are undergoing surgery on your head or neck please let us know so that we can liaise with your surgeon. In particular, they will need to take particular precautions using diathermy in the area of your implant as it can cause damage. Monopolar diathermy can be used below the neck as long as

care is taken to ensure that current does not pass near the head: it is safer to use bipolar diathermy where possible. Bipolar diathermy should not be used within 2 cm of the device.

Procedures such as transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) and neurostimulation, should not be undertaken.

Radiotherapy should not be provided close to the site of the implant but is otherwise safe.

5 – MRI scans

MRI can damage your implant so is best avoided if an alternative scan is possible. However, it can be undertaken but only with special precautions. These are specific to your device and the type of scan so you must contact us first.

6 – Static electricity

This can damage your implant so you should avoid contact with van de Graaf generators, and care should be taken in children's activities where static electricity is likely eg ball pools and parachute games

7 – Flying

In general, you should keep your device on and switched on through airport security and throughout the flight, unless you are asked to remove it or your manufacturer has advised otherwise. You should carry your implant information card.

Should you have any specific queries please contact your Implant team directly.

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