babyhearing.org

Expectations

What exactly is meant by "benefit" or "success" with a cochlear implant? It is important to keep several important facts in mind:

- The benefit from cochlear implants is not often immediate.
- Improvements occur over a period of months or even years.
- The amount of benefit seen is linked to the age of a child at the time of implantation, the cause of the hearing loss, and family support and involvement.

Reasonable expectations may include improved detection of environmental sounds and speech, improved speechreading ability, and improved clarity of the child's speech. How much speech understanding a child with a cochlear implant will obtain and how clear his or her speech will be is difficult to predict. Cochlear implant surgery should be viewed as the first step in a long process. Parents should understand that their participation is crucial in their child's educational process so that the most benefit can be achieved.

Children with cochlear implants need support services from a number of professionals for educational and speech language development. The amount of support needed is variable from one child to the next. A child's performance with a cochlear implant cannot be predicted. Each child will have varied performance with the cochlear implant. Providing the right support services and environment can enhance learning and development. It is important to remember that it can take up to one year after the implant is activated for distinct changes to show in a child's ability to communicate.

In a small number of cases, a child may show only limited benefit from the cochlear implant or seemingly no benefit at all. This can generally be linked to a significant malformation of the cochlea or to a hearing nerve that has a very limited number of nerve fibers. In other words, the cochlear implant is sending a signal, but the structures needed to pass the signal on to the brain are not there.

A variety of school placements are possible for children with cochlear implants. To make the most of a cochlear implant, a child needs be in a program that clearly states and supports listening and speaking goals. Children in auditory oral, simultaneous communication, or manual communication programs can all benefit from listening therapy or auditory training. All programs regardless of communication modality can emphasize listening and speaking goals. It is important to keep in mind that a child's individual communication goals, strengths, and abilities should be used to determine the educational setting. Placement should not be based solely on the fact that a cochlear implant is in use, and educational and support service needs must be assessed for each child.