



Tips for Listening to Music with your Cochlear Implant

Many people find that music is quite difficult with a cochlear implant, especially when they first receive it. However, if you are interested in trying it again, here are a few tips which could help you along the way.

1. Start with music that you know well. Your memory of the music will help you to fill in any gaps in what you hear.

Simple music is easier to hear with a cochlear implant than very complicated music. Some people start with nursery rhymes or simple folk songs, before trying more complex things. There has been a tendency for music to become more complicated over the years, both for classical and pop music. Sometimes older music is easier to listen to than modern music.

2. Cochlear implants often process rhythms better than melodies. Try listening to music that includes one or more of the following:
 - a. A simple rhythm e.g. Christmas carols such as 'O little town of Bethlehem'
 - b. A repetitive or predictable rhythm. Songs with choruses are often like this.
 - c. A strong beat. Try music that you can dance to.
3. Listening to one or two instruments is easier than listening to lots of instruments at the same time, even if they are playing the same tune.
4. Music can be part of a social activity. Taking part with other people can make listening more fun. Try dancing for example.
5. Some instruments are easier to identify than others. Broadly speaking, percussion instruments come across well (drums and piano); string instruments, especially if they are plucked, are fairly good; wind instruments can be difficult to identify.
6. Some detailed low frequency information can be picked up using hearing aids. If you have some residual hearing and have a hearing aid for your other ear, try using it when listening to music.



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7. Background noise gets in the way! In the context of music, backing music or accompaniment can be intrusive and reduce the extent to which you can pick up the tune. Try to choose music where the accompaniment is light.
8. It is easier to listen to 2 instruments that are very different than 2 instruments that are very similar. For example, listening to a trumpet and drum playing together is easier than listening to a trumpet and trombone playing together.
9. Think about the place where you are when listening to music. A quiet concert hall is better than an echoey cathedral; a quiet living room is better than a noisy car.
10. (This point particularly applies to those with Nucleus implants) If the volume of the music is very quiet, you may miss some sounds. If the volume of the music is very loud, you may not be able to hear the sounds very clearly and they might all be at the same level.
11. A direct connection into your processor can help to improve the quality of the signal. Use a direct input lead if you have one available.
12. A song can be easier to pick up than an instrumental piece, as the words can help you to follow the music.
13. Being able to see the person who is performing will help you to hear the music. If they are singing, you will be able to lip-read them. If they are playing, the movements they make will help you to make sense of the music. Try DVDs rather than CDs or watch a live performance. Alternatively follow the words or the music to help you keep up.
14. Practise makes perfect! This very much applies to listening to music with your cochlear implant. The sound will improve and become more meaningful the more you try.

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