

Deafness and hearing loss - Hearing therapy and support for common ear conditions



Information sheet G6

January 2020

This document is also available on request in Braille, large print, tape, disc and can be translated into different languages.

This information sheet is about:

- How hearing therapy can help you
- Where to find hearing therapists
- Tinnitus
- Cochlear implants

Hearing therapists provide a range of services for people with mild to profound hearing loss, hearing over-sensitivity, tinnitus, hearing aid users, cochlear implant patients and people with learning disabilities. Hearing therapists are based in audiology clinics.

Hearing therapists can provide rehabilitation for people newly diagnosed with hearing loss. This can include: -

- Explanation of the reasons behind hearing difficulties
- Support and help for people with a sudden and acquired hearing loss
- Support with every day problems resulting from hearing loss
- Advice on management of tinnitus, Meniere's Disease, Obscure Auditory Dysfunction (OAD), vertigo
- Support and help before and after cochlear implants
- Work with people who have a combined sight and hearing loss
- Information about equipment

If you would like to see a Hearing Therapist, ask your GP for further information.

Tinnitus

What is tinnitus?

Tinnitus can affect people of any age, and it is sometimes, but not always, associated with hearing loss.

Tinnitus, or head noises, can be described as noises heard by the individual in the absence of any real external noise. A wide range of noises are heard, such as rushing water, whistles, ringing, hissing, buzzing and grinding. It can happen occasionally, or it can be something that people live with all the time.

Tinnitus is not a disease or illness, and the causes are still not fully understood. Activity in the hearing system creates the noises, which the brain then notices and responds to.

Mild tinnitus is common, but severe tinnitus can affect your quality of life. Severe tinnitus can make you feel frustrated and stressed, especially as it can affect sleep. Anxiety over the tinnitus can make the physical symptoms worse, and a vicious circle can develop.

Treatments

There is no specific cure for tinnitus, but you should go to your GP who will probably refer you to an Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Consultant, or Hearing Therapist. Very occasionally, tinnitus can be a symptom of other diseases, so it is advisable to have it checked.

There are many strategies you can learn to help you cope with tinnitus. Some of these include:

- Relaxation techniques
- Keeping occupied
- Masking the tinnitus using other sounds
- Counselling
- Cognitive behaviour therapy

More help and advice

You can get more help and advice from your local hearing therapist or from the following voluntary organisations:

Action on Hearing Loss

Phone: 0808 808 6666 (voice)

Text: 0808 808 9000

Fax: 020 7296 8199

SMS: 0780 000 0360

Email: tinnitushelpline@hearingloss.org.uk (email hyperlink)

British Tinnitus Association

Ground Floor Unit 5

Woodsgate Close

Sheffield

S8 0TB.

Freephone Enquiry Line: 0800 018 0527

Fax: 0114 258 2279

Minicom: 0114 258 5694

Website: www.tinnitus.org.uk (hyperlink)

Email: infor@tinnitus.org.uk (email hyperlink)

Cochlear implants

What is a cochlear implant?

A cochlear implant is a small electronic device that gives the sensation of hearing if you are profoundly deaf. You will need an operation to put it in place.

There are tests that can show if an implant could help you, but it is difficult to predict how successful the implant will be before the operation. Some people will always need to lipread as well as listen. Others will learn to understand speech without lipreading.

Cochlear implants are not suitable for all profoundly deaf people. They may be suitable if you become profoundly deaf after you have learnt to speak. Your hearing nerve must function well, even though your cochlear is damaged. Some people may get on better with high-powered hearing aids, instead of a cochlear implant.

How to get a cochlear implant

If you want to be considered for a cochlear implant, talk to your GP, who can refer you to a hospital Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) consultant. The consultant can then refer you to a specialist centre for a cochlear implant assessment if it is right for you. At the clinic, you will be told what the operation involves, what the risks are, and about aftercare.

Organisations and support groups

There are several organisations that can support people who have cochlear implants:

British Cochlear Implant Group

This organisation represents all the cochlear implant centres and other specialist medical practitioners throughout the UK.

Website: www.b cig.org.uk (hyperlink)

Email: info@bcig.org.uk (email hyperlink)

National Cochlear Implant Users Association (NCIUA)

NCIUA is a forum for cochlear implant users and their families.

Email: secretary@nciua.org.uk (email hyperlink)

Website: www.nciua.org.uk (hyperlink)

Ear Foundation

This is a national charity supporting people with cochlear implants, their families and supporting professionals.

Phone: 0115 942 1985

Text enquiries: 07852 296613

Fax: 0115 942 9054

Email: info@earfoundation.org.uk (email hyperlink)

Your opportunity to feedback

We welcome your comments about the services you receive. If you would like to tell us what you think, please either:

- Contact us on our website www.somerset.gov.uk (hyperlink), or
- Phone Somerset Direct on 0300 123 2224, or
- Contact the Adults and Health Customer Experience Officer:
Floor B2
County Hall
Taunton
TA1 4DY
Email: customerexperience@somerset.gov.uk (email hyperlink)

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