



Cochlear Implant Center
**Westchester
Medical Center**
Westchester Medical Center Health Network

CochlearConnections

News from the Cochlear Implant Center | Summer 2021

Cochlear Implant Center

19 Bradhurst Avenue
Suite 3800 South
Hawthorne, NY 10532
914.493.4634

CochlearImplantCenter@WMCHHealth.org

The Cochlear Implant Center at Westchester Medical Center, flagship of the Westchester Medical Center Health Network (WMCHHealth), provides coordinated audiology and speech-therapy services for cochlear implant patients and those considering this life-changing technology. It is the only center between New York City and Albany providing comprehensive services for children and adult patients.

The Cochlear Implant Center is staffed by a team of highly trained audiologists and speech pathologists with expertise in evaluation and rehabilitation services for individuals who are cochlear implant candidates and those who receive a cochlear implant. Cochlear implantation is a highly successful technology that allows deaf children to hear and speak, and enables deafened adults to enhance their lives. The Cochlear Implant Center provides comprehensive services such as individualized programming of the implant and speech-therapy services.



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Advancing Care. Here.

WestchesterMedicalCenter.org

Westchester Medical Center Health Network includes

Westchester Medical Center | Maria Fareri Children's Hospital
Behavioral Health Center | MidHudson Regional Hospital
Good Samaritan Hospital | Bon Secours Community Hospital
St. Anthony Community Hospital | HealthAlliance Hospital: Broadway Campus
HealthAlliance Hospital: Mary's Avenue Campus | Margaretville Hospital



Cochlear Implant Tips for Summer

After the long, cold winter, summer is finally here! Keeping your or your child's sound processor working at its optimized level can be a challenge in the summer. The sound processors are delicate instruments that are impacted by moisture, dust, and physical damage. Here are some tips to make sure your processors continue working throughout the summer months.

Use your water-wear option!

Each manufacturer has waterproofing options for their sound processors.

Use your active-wear or retention options including headbands, safety lines, or hats. This will ensure your processors don't fall off or get lost when you're enjoying the hot summer weather.

If your processor has a compatible smart phone app, make sure to pair your processor to your phone and activate the location settings. This way, if the processor is lost, there is greater likelihood it can be found!

Use your drying kit every night!

If something does happen to your processor or equipment, don't delay! Contact the manufacturer right away for repair or replacement parts.

Schedule your appointment today!!

Call 914.493.4634 or email us at

CochlearImplantCenter@wmchealth.org

Spotlight on Staff

Kristi D'Auria, AuD, CCC-A

Kristi is a senior audiologist at the Cochlear Implant Center and has been practicing since 2005. Kristi has worked with cochlear implants since 2007 when she first joined the cochlear implant team.

What is your favorite vacation destination?

Of all the places I've visited, despite being one of the furthest, Italy has always made me feel like I am home. There's this charming town in the Tuscany region called Greve. The views are breathtaking and can make you feel invincible. Italy, for me, is the place I feel the most at peace yet the most emotionally vulnerable.

What is your favorite part about working with cochlear implants?

I am very thankful and humbled by my role on the Cochlear Implant team at Westchester Medical Center. An obvious response to the question posed would be the initial moment of activation, when the recipient first begins receiving sound. The experience is wonderful and emotional to witness; however, the unique bond that forms between patient and audiologist is truly my favorite part. It is a relationship built on trust and vulnerability and for me, one of the most meaningful parts of being an audiologist.

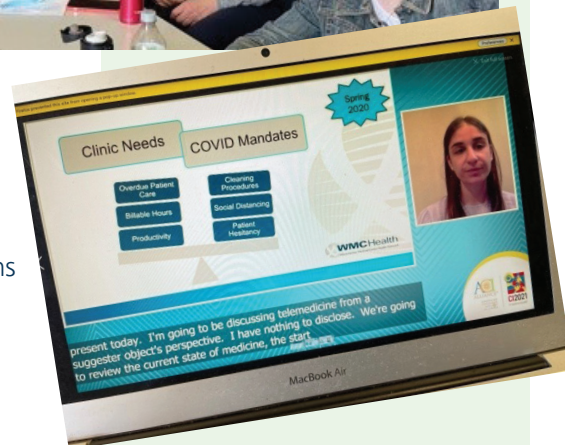
If you could invite anyone to dinner who would it be, why, and what would you serve them?

I was a child when my grandfather passed away and unable to truly grasp how influential he was. As an adult, I would embrace the opportunity to listen to his stories about being an immigrant and a soldier. I know my Papa would adore seeing me as an adult and watching my mother become a grandparent herself. He would be proud to know that our family's values have remained strong even after his passing. As his host, I would cook my Papa beef braciole over spaghetti and marinara sauce, just like my Nana used to serve for Sunday dinner.



The WMC Cochlear Implant Team attended The American Cochlear Implant Alliance's Annual Convention virtually in April 2021. The team was selected to present two original presentations and three research posters!

- Implementation of Remote Programming to Improve Productivity in the Post-COVID-19 Clinical Setting
- Implementation of Cognitive and Hearing Handicap Measures Into Cochlear Implant Candidacy Evaluations
- Aural Rehabilitation for Single-Sided Deafness: The Benefits of Teletherapy
- Cochlear Implant Outcomes in the Geriatric Population
- Clinical Use of Electrically Evoked Stapedial Reflex Threshold Measures for Cochlear Implant MAPping Optimization



Top photo - left to right: Samantha Morgan, AuD; Mindy Schmelzer, AuD; Kristi D'Auria, AuD; Michelle Albera, MS, CCC-SLP; Katrina Stidham, MD and Rivka Bornstein, AuD virtually attend the 2021 American Cochlear Implant Alliance Conference.

Photo beneath: Samantha Morgan, AuD, presents work from the Cochlear Implant Center at Westchester Medical Center on Remote Implant Programming, during Covid at the virtual ACIA Conference.

Save the Date!

Hearing Rehabilitation Workshop

Thursday, September 9

1 p.m.

Adults age 60 and older with CIs are invited to participate. The group will meet for one hour via Zoom for 8 weeks.

Interested? Let us know!

Call 914 493-4634 or email us at CochlearImplantCenter@wmchealth.org.

Remote Programming Appointments:

Available for patients with Cochlear Americas cochlear implants!

Now available for patients off all ages, see your audiologist from the comfort of home! When scheduling, simply ask for a remote appointment. Our staff will ship equipment to your home, free of charge.



CochlearConnections

Traveling with a Hearing Loss:

Summer is finally here! As life is starting to return to normal, places are re-opening, and people are starting to travel again. Traveling with hearing loss can be challenging, but that is no reason to miss out on discovering new places and/or visiting your loved ones! Follow along with these tips to have a safe and rewarding adventures ahead of you!

Preparing Ahead of Time

- When booking a hotel, ask for available accommodations for people with hearing loss. Many hotels in the United States have rooms with amenities for people with hearing loss (e.g. flashing lights for the phone, doorbell, and fire alarm) and are available when requested in advance.
- If you are traveling with a tour company, alert them of your accommodation needs as they may be able to help you.
- Many museums, theaters, and other performance spaces in large cities provide hearing assistive technologies. Send an email or call the venue for up-to-date information.
- If you travel by plane, train, or car, download all the relevant apps onto your smartphone before you go. Most airlines and train company apps include timetables and provide alerts for gate changes or delays. Practice using the apps before you go so you are prepared in case you have trouble on your trip.
- When flying try to book a seat up front where the flight crew can find you and communicate with you if needed. Also, notify the flight staff and crew of your communication needs and ask them to let you know if there are any travel changes.
- When you go through any security, keep your hearing devices on and don't remove them.
- Note: Airlines do not allow people with hearing loss to sit in the exit row seats for safety reasons.

Reminder List of What to Pack for Plane, Train, or Car

- Always bring an extra cochlear implant and/or hearing aid, a spare charger (if available), headpiece cables, microphone protectors, and a backup sound processor.

Pack the batteries into different bags in case one gets misplaced or stolen.

Always have extra batteries in your carry-on bag.

If you are traveling internationally, bring an outlet converter to charge your rechargeable batteries and/or to plug in your electronic devices.

- Bring a portable vibrating travel alarm clock.

If you don't have one, you can use your smartphone, Apple Watch, or Fitbit as your vibrating alarm clock.

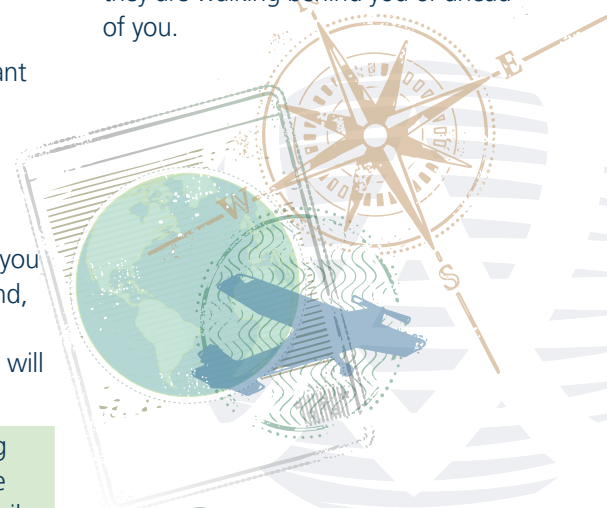
Many hotels in the United States may have one!

- Bring your cochlear implant ID card when traveling through airports and places that have metal detectors. If you don't have one or can't find one, please contact your cochlear implant manufacturer to get another one.
- Make sure to bring your cochlear implant swimming case. If you don't have one, keep your hearing devices secured in a water proof sealed case to avoid getting wet!
- Bring your remote microphone in case you need to transmit the voice of your friend, family member, or even a tour guide directly to your hearing device(s) and it will help block out the background noise.

This is also helpful if you are doing long road trips; give the remote microphone to the other passengers so they can easily communicate with you while driving.

Tips for Camping, Swimming, and/or Hiking

- Carry an external charger bank, or even a solar-powered power bank, so that you can recharge your batteries, or use your car's USB port to charge your batteries.
- As an alternative to rechargeable batteries, you can always bring disposable batteries (but please dispose them properly through a battery recycling bank)!
- If camping with friends and family, bring an extra flashlight or solar lights in the tent to help with illumination, to lip-read friends at night. It will create a nice glow, compared to the harsh light of a head-on flashlight!
- Make sure you secure a retention cord for your sound processor or hearing aid to your shirt, hair, or headband to avoid losing your devices in the mud, leaves, or water!!
- Use a cochlear implant swimming case for all aquatic activities.
- Use a remote microphone so you can communicate with your fellow hikers if they are walking behind you or ahead of you.



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Cochlear Implant Patient Corner

Hailey is a bubbly two-and-a-half-year old bilateral cochlear implant recipient. Hailey received her first implant right after her first birthday. Our team interviewed Hailey's mother, Krystal, to get her perspective on Hailey's cochlear implant journey thus far.

What would you tell parents of a child just diagnosed with hearing loss?

I would tell them that everything is going to be okay even if it doesn't feel like it. There are so many options nowadays for a child with hearing loss. I would also tell them to grieve and accept it. Grieve the child with normal hearing you thought you were going to have with normal hearing so you can move forward on your child's hearing loss journey and focus on their success.

What were you feeling before Hailey's surgery? Was it different than what you expected?

Before Hailey's surgery, I was so nervous and my anxiety was sky-high. I reminded myself a lot that this surgery is what was best for her and she needs to learn how to hear and talk. Once she was in surgery, I felt some relief knowing that this was getting done and over with. I focused on her recovery and what's to come next. I did not expect to feel relief; I thought I would be a nervous wreck the whole time she was in surgery. In the end, everything went well and I wish I didn't stress as much before the surgery.

What has surprised you about Hailey's hearing journey?

What has surprised me about Hailey is how well she adapted to her cochlear implants. She screamed and cried during her activation so seeing that, I thought she would hate them. Over a small amount of time, she learned to keep

them on so well. She now gets upset if one comes off by accident and puts her coil right back on. She has learned to love hearing with them, which makes me so happy.

What is your favorite moment in Hailey's hearing journey so far?

My favorite moment is hearing Hailey say new words and sounds after being patient with her and remembering her hearing age. It took some time, lots of talking, mappings, and speech therapy, but once she started saying a ton of words, it was so exciting! It reminded me that everything she went through was worth it and had to be done to get to where we are now. I think a lot of us take for granted when our kids start talking, but having a cochlear implant child, you cherish every word you hear them say. The excitement is so much more to the point where we are all screaming Yay, jumping, and clapping to cheer on her new speech accomplishments.

How do you make sure Hailey wears the devices all day, every day?

Since Hailey is a toddler, I highly rely on ear suspenders. They're a thin elastic headband with a silicone grip on the inside to prevent from sliding off her head. They are made specifically for cochlear implants and hearing aids. I bought hers on Etsy and they offer all sorts of colors. They hold her implants around her ears and I even slide her glasses through them to keep everything in place all day.

Does Hailey still pull her devices off?

In the beginning of Hailey's hearing journey, she would rip her headband off all the time. I would just tell her no and put it back on. I did this a lot! Over a little time, she learned not to take her headband off. Hailey learned she wouldn't be able to hear if she does this so she doesn't touch her headband or devices anymore.

What is Hailey's favorite sound?

Any type of music! She loves to dance in her car seat to the music on the radio, music videos she likes on YouTube, and she even started dancing during her brother's school chorus performance.

What are your goals for Hailey over the next year?

My goal for Hailey is to increase her vocabulary so she can tell me more of what she wants and to start using 2-3-word sentences.

What is your recommendation for parents with a child with cochlear implants?

My recommendation would be to make sure your child is wearing their cochlear implants from the time they wake up, to the time they go to bed. Keep up with mapping, speech therapy, and ENT appointments. Narrate everything you are doing around your child. Also, to trust the process because this journey is so fulfilling. It's the little things, like your child saying a simple word, that are so rewarding. You will start to see your child do amazing things that many parents take for granted every day.



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