

# Cochlear Family

Keeping you supported, connected, inspired

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Cochlear®

# Champion swimmer shares the “greatest challenge of my life”

You don't imagine professional athletes struggle with a challenge. But champion swimmer, Robyn Lamsam, says coming to terms with her son's hearing loss has been “the biggest challenge of my life”. She says help and support from others has made all the difference and that social media is a great way to connect with others. Find out why.

Professional athletes are typically very comfortable with challenges and Robyn Lamsam from Hong Kong is no different.

At the peak of her career, Robyn held 21 national swimming records, was a silver and bronze medallist in the 1994 Hiroshima Asian Games and in 1997 was awarded the Badge of Honour from Queen Elizabeth II from the UK in recognition of her achievements and contribution to sport. Robyn also qualified for the 1992 Summer Games in Barcelona at the tender age of 14.

But Robyn quickly admits that her resilience was put to the test five years ago when she discovered her son, Kyle, was diagnosed as profoundly deaf. In 2017, at 10 months of age, Kyle underwent surgery for two cochlear implants.

So, when Robyn was approached two years ago to appear in a TV show to trace her life as a former professional athlete, an irony was not lost on her. The focus of the TV show was for former champions to take on a new challenge: in this case for Robyn to swim competitively 20 years after retiring. But for Robyn, nurturing a baby with cochlear implants and knowing how to navigate life ahead now presented her with “the greatest challenge of my life”. ▶



Robyn Lamsam with her son Kyle, Cochlear Nucleus System recipient.

◀ But like most professional athletes, Robyn confronts challenges head on. After three days of what she describes as inconsolable sadness, she realised she needed to refocus.

Turning back to her days competing in the pool and years of coaching has helped Robyn remain tightly focussed on what needed to be done: to support Kyle. She says the word “can’t” isn’t part of her vocabulary.

But she admits it hasn’t been easy and support from others has been, and continues to be, key for this family to thrive.

Talking to others gave me hope, “There was so much love and support from family and friends around the world – those were the messages that I needed – that everything was going to be ok. That was the boost I needed because I needed to be strong for Kyle.”

Robyn says being open to asking for help beyond one’s inner circle also helps enormously. But she recognises this is not always easy for everyone.

“Talking to other mothers gave me so much hope – hope was one of the things I treasured most before I really knew what was going on and that sustained me. If their children could do it, why couldn’t mine?”

But how do you connect with other families going through similar experiences?

Robyn recommends parents ask their clinician to put them in touch with other local families dealing with hearing loss and living with cochlear implants.

She concedes that living in Asia, some families struggle with being open about their child’s hearing loss because of a perceived stigma associated with hearing loss.

“This technology is enabling our children to hear. Kyle is a living example of the wonderful impact of the life-changing device as well as the importance of early intervention.”

Using social media to connect with others Robyn says social media is a great way to connect with people who typically share their experiences openly. You can also ask recipients or parents specific questions and learn from each other in what can be a more open and candid environment. And there are forums for parents of children with cochlear implants as well as pages for recipients.

Robyn and Kyle are very open about his cochlear implants and sound processors, and take every opportunity they can to talk about the technology when anyone shows interest, especially other children at school.

“By educating the child, we are educating the parents,” said Robyn. “When I see someone staring, we talk about it – we’re very open about that.”

For this family, the **Cochlear™ Nucleus® Kanso® Sound Processor** has been a great solution as Kyle prefers an off the ear device. ▶

“By educating the child, we are educating the parents,” said Robyn. “When I see someone staring, we talk about it – we’re very open about that.”

Robyn Lamsam, mother of Kyle, Cochlear Nucleus recipient.

◀ The family has learned some lessons along the way, but they are always happy to share tips and advice for others:

**1** Make sure your child knows how important and valuable the sound processors are. Robyn learned this the hard way after Kyle flushed one of his sound processors down the toilet at age three. “Now he knows how important they are.”

**2** Make sure your child knows to protect their sound processors, for example, encourage them to avoid damaging them and to protect them in the event of rain. “The minute it starts to rain, Kyle drops everything and covers his ears.”

**3** The Cochlear headband\* was very practical when Kyle was much younger, to keep the sound processor in place.

**4** As Kyle becomes older and his hair grew longer, the Safety Lines\*\* have helped to attach the sound processor to Kyle’s hair or clothing. Kyle also uses the lines when using the **Aqua+** in the water. When Kyle was younger and didn’t have as much hair, they used the longer safety lines to attach the processors to his clothes. As his hair grew longer, they were able to use the shorter clips to attach directly to his hair.

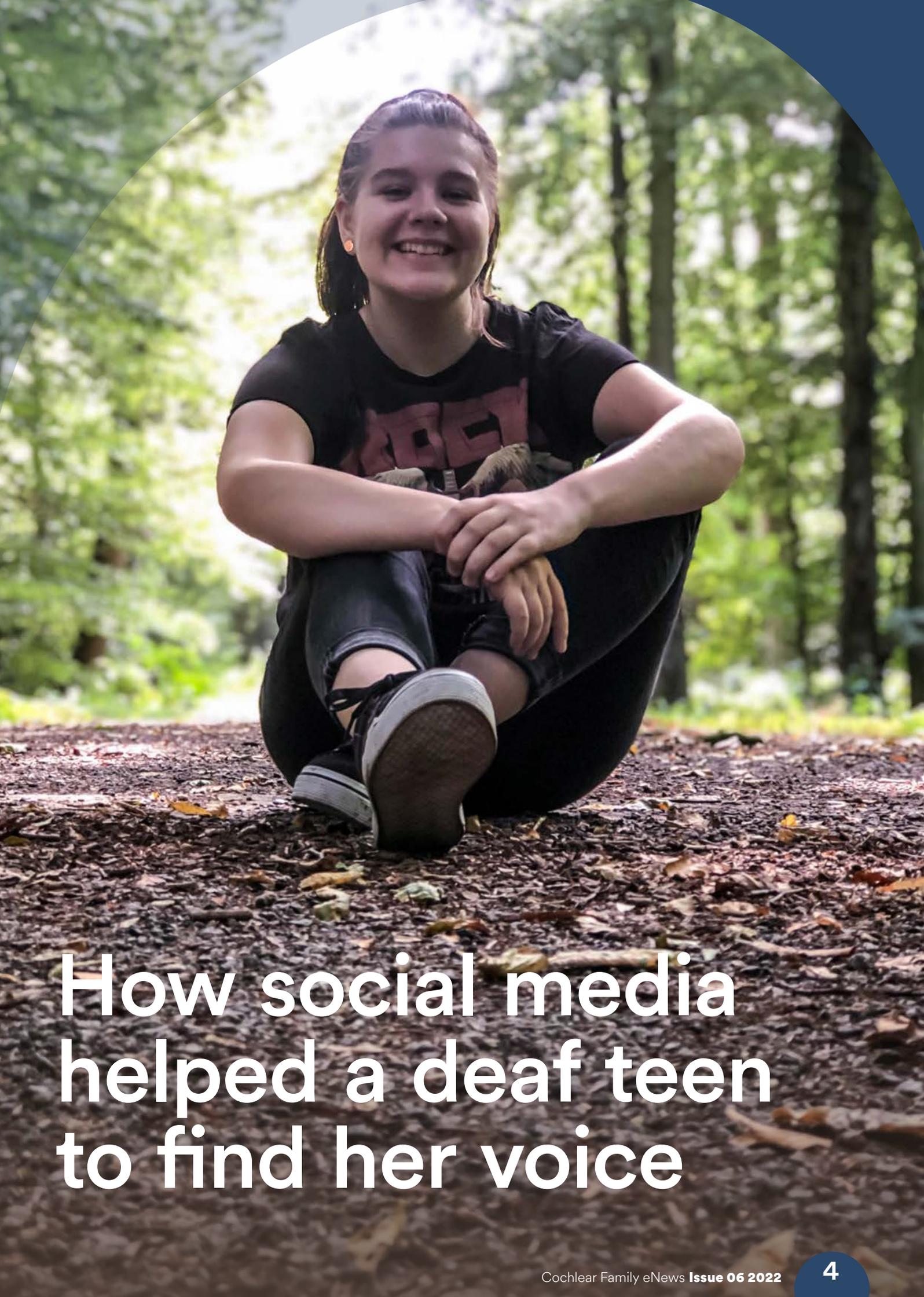
These days, Kyle is thriving; he attends a mainstream school and loves to participate in multiple sports – swimming, basketball, tennis, golf and baseball.

“The way I see it, no one wants their child to have any disadvantage – but we all have our lot in life,” said Robyn. “I can do everything in my power to protect Kyle, but it’s ultimately up to him.”

Discover **Cochlear’s retention options** and how the **Aqua+** can waterproof<sup>^</sup> your child’s sound processor.

“Kyle is a living example of the wonderful impact of the life-changing device as well as the importance of early intervention.”

Robyn Lamsam, mother of Kyle, Cochlear Nucleus System recipient.



# How social media helped a deaf teen to find her voice

**Instagram helped 18-year-old Gina Marie find the self-confidence to overcome her fear of more surgery. Now, with her second cochlear implant, Gina Marie is inspiring her 12,000+ followers to live a full life.**

Finding a supportive community isn't always easy, especially when you're a teenager with hearing loss. That's why 18-year-old Gina Marie decided to create her own support network and feel proud of her Cochlear hearing solution.

Growing up in Germany, Gina Marie found school socially challenging, deciding to hide her hearing loss and Cochlear sound processor from others.

"I always felt lonely back then," she said. "I was also bullied because I always spoke strangely ... they didn't know about my deafness at the time."

Born deaf, Gina Marie got her first cochlear implant as a toddler. Although she'd wanted a second cochlear implant since age 11, Gina Marie was too nervous about undergoing more surgery.

Now a young adult, Gina Marie has found new confidence through social media. Her story resonated with other teenagers living with hearing loss and she gained 12,600 Instagram followers in just a few years. Making new online friends who shared their own experiences with hearing loss and life with a cochlear implant convinced Gina Marie to reconsider her second surgery.

"A year or two ago, everyone said that two [cochlear implants] were way better than just one," she said. ▶



Gina Marie, Cochlear Nucleus System recipient.

“I can dive and swim with the Aqua+. I had never heard underwater in 14 years. The first time I heard underwater, I couldn’t stop diving.”

Gina Marie, bilateral Cochlear Nucleus System recipient.

◀ With the support of her online community, Gina Marie overcame her nerves and now has two **Nucleus 7 Sound Processors**. “Now, I don’t need to be afraid anymore. Fear prevents us from doing a lot, but it has to be overcome,” she said. “I am glad that it’s now behind me.”

Gina Marie finds that having bilateral cochlear implants helps her hear more easily and has improved her safety. “I can hear from both directions now,” she explains. “With one implant, you have to concentrate hard on what the person said, and now it’s a little more relaxed.” This has helped Gina in communicating with her family, at school and in getting her driver’s license, she adds.

From school to the pool, Gina Marie relishes the ability to stream sound directly to her two Nucleus 7 Sound Processors. At school, the **Cochlear Wireless Mini Microphone 2+** helps Gina Marie hear the teacher clearly in class and participate in group discussions.

As someone who loves swimming, Gina Marie enjoys being able to hear underwater using her **Aqua+ accessory**. “I can dive and swim with Aqua+. Before, I had to use sign language,” she said. “I had never heard underwater in 14 years. The first time I heard underwater, I couldn’t stop diving.”

At home, she lives the typical life of a teenager. “We communicate normally without sign language,” she says before cheekily adding: “My siblings are very noisy and luckily I can turn off my sound processors if they annoy me!”

With her many accomplishments in recent years, it’s easy to see Gina Marie’s bubbling positivity as she supports other young people with hearing loss. Her best advice to other struggling teens? “Don’t let it get you down! You are perfect as you are and other people who do not see that, do not deserve to spend time with you,” she asserts. “Don’t hide [your hearing loss]. Stand by it. It’s easier than you think!”

Learn more about the **Aqua+** and **Cochlear’s True Wireless Devices**.

# Cochlear implant recipient takes on Australia's ultimate desert race

Twenty-year-old dirt bike rider and cochlear implant recipient, Nick, recently undertook the ride of his life: the gruelling Tatt's Finke Desert Race in Alice Springs, the red centre of Australia. Entering on a motorbike he built himself, Nick had been preparing for the two-day off-road, multi-terrain race for months. It was his ultimate challenge since first learning to ride a motor bike at age three.

Encouraged by his parents, Nick grew up with a love of sports. Despite being deaf in his left ear since birth and losing most of the hearing in his right ear during a family holiday in third grade, Nick has never allowed his hearing loss to hold him back.

Receiving his cochlear implant at 10 years of age, Nick says it's made "a huge difference" to his life. From early on, he felt more included and his school grades improved. "I didn't really have to sit at the front of the class anymore, I could hear the teacher," said Nick. "I could play card games or do an activity with another classmate, and not have to look at them. I could just hear them." ▶



Nick, Cochlear Nucleus recipient.

◀ Nick's cochlear implant system also offered the security of being able to hear cars and trams, as well as what was being said around him – something that allowed him to ride his motorbike and enjoy a wide range of sports growing up.

“At school I played racquetball, basketball, downball, tennis ... I did everything,” said Nick. “I didn't really say no to any sports. I grew up motorbike riding, I grew up wakeboarding and snowboarding.” He has worked out how to accommodate his **Cochlear Nucleus 7 Sound Processor** under protective sports helmets.

Rather than motor cross, which often involves clusters of riders racing together, Nick has chosen the Enduro events where participants race against the clock and with a staggered start according to their position in a preliminary time trial.

“That's a bit safer with your enhanced gearing. In my opinion, it's a little friendlier too ... there's less accidents ... it's more technical,” said Nick who, given the noise of the engines, doesn't need to rely on his hearing during the race itself.

As well as gym sessions and running, working full-time as an apprentice landscaper helped Nick prepare physically for this latest challenge. A challenge, which involves continuously racing at speed for three-and-a-half hours each day.

With COVID-19 restrictions in his home state forewarned, Nick was able to get to the race location before borders closed and compete for the first 230km. Racing in the competition for the first time, Nick said his aim was not to be among the fastest racers, but to finish the race and to “learn how to do it properly and safely” in the often deep sandy, desert conditions.

Many of Nick's fellow competitors were impressed with his participation in the race and genuinely interested in knowing about his cochlear implant and what motivated him to compete.

“They thought it was amazing that I had gotten this far, to be able to do the race, and not see my hearing loss as a negative,” said Nick. “Being open about it helps educate them as well, so they know how to talk to another person with a hearing impairment.”

With his sights already set on next year's Finke Desert Race, Nick is keen to encourage other young cochlear implant recipients to “go for it ... no matter what it is – surfing, snowboarding, motorbike riding – don't let your hearing impairment or any disability stop you from having a ‘crack’ at anything you enjoy”. He says that it's not about being the best but participating, having fun and doing it to the best of your ability.

“They thought it was amazing that I had gotten this far, to be able to do the race, and not see my hearing loss as a negative.”

Nick, Cochlear Nucleus System recipient.

Cochlear Family's Hear My Story feature, gives our recipients and their families a platform to share their hearing journey using their own words. Meet 21-year-old Sharanya and her mother Sarita from India. Sharanya shares how her mother's guidance taught her to embrace her hearing loss and celebrate what makes her different. Read how her bravery and courage has helped her achieve her dreams and discover her love of dance. ▶

# Hear My Story: Meet Sharanya from India



Sharanya, Cochlear Nucleus System recipient with her mother Sarita.



Sharanya, Cochlear Nucleus System recipient

◀ When I was only 11-months-old I was hospitalised for Meningitis. To treat my meningitis, doctors prescribed me with quite intense medications, and I had to undergo brain surgery.

Fortunately, everything went well and post-surgery, things started getting back to normal. But during my hospitalisation, my mum began to feel that something was amiss. I stopped responding to my name being called and the sounds of my favourite rhymes. My parents observed my behaviour for a couple of days and were convinced that something was not right. They arranged for me to have a hearing test which confirmed that I had bilateral hearing loss. Subsequently, we realised that hearing loss is the most common after-effect of meningitis.

As devastating as it was, my parents were determined to give me the best life possible - a life with sound, a life with hearing. I used hearing aids for almost two years, but it did not make a significant difference to me. My parents noticed that I was paying more attention to lip reading and gestures rather than hearing. Simultaneously, they were doing more research and visiting specialists; during which they heard about a surgical procedure called cochlear implantation. ▶

“When I was only 11-months-old I was hospitalised for Meningitis. To treat my meningitis, doctors prescribed me with quite intense medications.”

Sharanya, Cochlear Nucleus System recipient

◀ They learnt that along with surgery, I would also need to undergo Auditory Verbal Therapy (AVT) to help me get used to hearing with my new cochlear implant and develop speech and language. They even met some families with children who had received a cochlear implant to learn more about their experiences.

Getting a cochlear implant wasn't easy, but my parents are wonderful and determined people. They overcame all physical, emotional and financial barriers, and I had my cochlear implant surgery at the age of 3. I have some memories of the time when I could suddenly hear so many sounds. It was a magical feeling, probably one of the best moments of my life. In my mum's words, "Sharanya went from a dark world of silence to a sparkly world of sounds!"

In just a couple of years, I was enrolled into mainstream schooling and life began to change. I remember how everyone used to ask me about my device. Initially, I used to get quite upset and annoyed, but my mum always encouraged me and was a great source of love and support. She told me to embrace my hearing loss and taught me to celebrate my differences, because that's

what made me special. When I started treating my device like my ear, I got more confident. I realised that most people were just inquisitive (as I would have been too).

Today, I am pursuing a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology and Anthropology. I am also a trained Bharatnatyam dancer and conduct dance coaching for adults and young children. In my spare time, I love reading, binge watching tv series and also volunteer at an NGO to assist and support the less fortunate.

Over the years, I have learned that life may not always be easy. I remember being shy and lacking confidence. I would worry that asking questions (sometimes repeatedly) would make me a burden on those around me. It was only when I voiced my feelings and expressed myself to my parents, family and friends; that I realised I should not fear anything. People who truly care about you, will always take an additional step to help and support you. Achieving any goals in life is possible, it just takes bravery and the courage to go out there and seek them.



“I have some memories of the time when I could suddenly hear so many sounds. It was a magical feeling, probably one of the best moments of my life.”

Sharanya, Cochlear Nucleus System recipient



Six

## simple steps to use the **Cochlear Nucleus® Smart App**

Did you know you can use your compatible smartphone to adjust your sound processor volume and settings to focus on the sounds you want to hear? You can also use your smartphone to locate your sound processor if it's gone missing or to check its battery life.

All of these benefits are possible and at your fingertips using the Cochlear Nucleus Smart App, which also allows you to change programs without using a separate remote control. The app can also give you access to your personal hearing information.

The latest technology offers some amazing advantages –  
once you know how to use it!

## Here are some tips and short cuts to help you find your way around the Nucleus Smart App.

1

### Download the Nucleus Smart App

Start by downloading the app from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.

2

### Pair your sound processor

The Nucleus Smart App works with the Cochlear Nucleus 7 and Kanso 2<sup>™</sup> Sound Processors with compatible Apple and Android<sup>™</sup> devices. For more information on how to pair your device to your compatible smartphone, please visit our [Device Support](#) page on cochlear.com.

3

### How to log in

To start using the Nucleus Smart App, you'll need to log in using your Cochlear Account. If you don't already have one, you can create an account through the app and follow the instructions. The first time you use the app, you'll be taken through instructions to set up your sound processors.

4

### Adjust sound settings

You can adjust the sensitivity, bass, treble and master volume limit levels for sound processor(s) that are connected to the app.

Please speak to your clinician about enabling this feature. Make sure you are listening to sound through your processor when you make any changes.

You can see these options by tapping 'Volume' from the screen to expand the control panel. Then click on 'More' to see 'Volume Settings'. You can adjust the different levels by tapping the '+' or '-' buttons.

When you're happy with your settings, tap on the 'X' on the top left corner of your screen. If you change 'Sensitivity', this will automatically return to its default settings when you turn off your sound processor, but the other adjustments will remain in place.

5

### How to adjust streamed audio

You can use the Nucleus Smart App to separately adjust the volume of streamed audio and sound from your sound processor microphones.

Once you're streaming from an audio source like a Cochlear Wireless TV Streamer or Mini Microphone 2+, tap on the 'Audio Sources' menu item from the app's screen.

Make sure your audio source is highlighted and tap on the 'More' button near the bottom of the screen. This will open more settings where you can adjust the volume for your streamed device. You can close these settings by tapping the 'X' on the top left corner of the phone screen.

To change the volume streamed from your smart phone, you can adjust it directly using the buttons on the side of your device.

6

### How to change programs and ForwardFocus

The Nucleus Smart App allows you to access features including SmartSound<sup>®</sup> iQ SCAN technology and ForwardFocus if enabled by your clinician.



For more information visit our device support page.



Caroline, Cochlear Nucleus System recipient.

# How to wear a helmet with your Cochlear<sup>TM</sup> sound processor

Are you wanting to get active and participate in a sport that might require a helmet? If so, how can you keep your sound processor in place and what should you look for when purchasing a helmet? Avid cyclists, Caroline and Roger share their tips to help you get started. ▶

◀ Cycling, snowboarding, horse riding, skate boarding, and other similar outdoor activities, are great ways to stay fit, enjoy the outdoors and lead an active lifestyle.

For many sports, it's important to stay safe by wearing a helmet, but it's just as important to be able to hear – whether it's listening to your teammates or staying safe while biking on busy roads.

For avid cyclist Caroline, who has been using a **Cochlear Nucleus Kanso Sound Processor** since 2018, staying safe is a priority.

“The truth is, I didn't always feel safe riding with hearing loss. It can be a real hazard if you can't hear

fellow cyclists on the trails,” said Caroline.

“I was worried when I was implanted if I'd need to give up biking. How would a helmet fit over my sound processor without having to cut the foam, which would compromise the integrity of the helmet?”

“But there was no need to worry: ‘Mo’ (my sound processor's nickname – short for ‘more sound, more love, more life’) fits easily under my helmet. With my sound processor, my experience on the bike has been incredible and has opened a whole new world.”

So what do you need to consider when wearing a helmet with your sound processor? Here are some tips. ▶



“I was worried when I was implanted if I'd need to give up biking. How would a helmet fit over my sound processor without having to cut the foam, which would compromise the integrity of the helmet?”

Caroline, Cochlear Nucleus System recipient

# “Whatever your sport, find a way to use it – hearing wins hands down.”

Roger, Cochlear Nucleus System recipient.

## 1 Choose the right helmet

The good news is that it is possible to wear a helmet with a cochlear implant and sound processor – with a little preparation. It might take a few trials but you are likely to find a helmet that works.

Cochlear advises speaking to your hearing healthcare professional before getting started with your chosen sport, and that you wear a helmet designed for the specific activity you’re pursuing. Try different sizes and brands until you find a helmet that doesn’t knock off the processor or coils.

When it comes to hard-shell helmets – the kind people wear for cycling – the main thing to remember is that you should not make any physical alteration to the helmet as it could reduce the protection it provides.

Charity cyclist Roger, has a **Cochlear Nucleus 7 Sound Processor**. He says it’s worth getting used to wearing your sound processor with your helmet. “Whatever your sport, find a way to use it – hearing wins hands down.”

## 2 Secure your coil and processor

It helps to find a way to secure the coil and sound processor so that they are not dislodged when putting the helmet on or taking it off.

One option is to wear a thin sweat band around your head that covers the coil and the top of the sound processor. The Cochlear Headband is one example you can try and is compatible with **Nucleus Kanso and Nucleus Kanso 2<sup>^^</sup> Sound Processors**.

Another option is to wear a thin skull cap that goes over the crown of the head and covers the sound processor. These are both available from sporting equipment stores and online.

Roger finds there are other benefits with wearing a skull cap: “I wear a skull cap or bandana to help with sweat and cut out wind noise.”

Another option is to use Cochlear Safety Cords which are compatible with Nucleus 7, Kanso and Kanso 2 Sound Processors and are available in packs of two for use with one sound processor as well as bilateral.

## 3 Choose a processor that’s secure

Cochlear sound processors are designed to be comfortable and secure for people who are into sports and being active.

Roger’s Nucleus 7 Sound Processor is Cochlear’s smallest and lightest behind-the-ear sound processor and it’s good for an active lifestyle.

Caroline uses a Kanso Sound Processor, which is a great choice for active people. It’s a discreet, off-the-ear sound processor, designed to stay on your head for daily life and light exercise.

If you’re planning on doing something more strenuous or want to feel more secure, try a Cochlear Safety Line. There are two types: one that attaches to your clothing and another that attaches to the hair. If you’re out on the road, or enjoying intense sports, the Cochlear Headband is the best way to keep the Kanso in place.

Recipients say it’s easy to live an active lifestyle with a cochlear implant and sound processor.

Caroline said: “Mo doesn’t need any extra attention. I change batteries every other day and I wipe the sound processor with a soft cloth every day. I store Mo in my dry aid kit each night while I sleep so that any residual moisture from sweating is looked after and keeps Mo working well, giving me great sound and fidelity.”

Do you lead an active lifestyle?  
Keep your cochlear implant protected while you enjoy your favourite activities. Learn more about our **storage kits and accessories**.



## Keeping you connected and supported

Thank you for taking care, staying calm and being safe during these uncertain times. We are still contactable and available to assist with your enquiries and support needs, just get in touch with one of our helpful Customer Service team members by emailing [cincustomerservice@cochlear.com](mailto:cincustomerservice@cochlear.com)



# Hear now. And always

As the global leader in implantable hearing solutions, Cochlear is dedicated to helping people with moderate to profound hearing loss experience a life full of hearing. We have provided more than 600,000 implantable devices, helping people of all ages to hear and connect with life's opportunities.

We aim to give people the best lifelong hearing experience and access to innovative future technologies. We have the industry's best clinical, research and support networks.

That's why more people choose Cochlear than any other hearing implant company

[www.cochlear.com](http://www.cochlear.com)

Please seek advice from your health professional about treatments for hearing loss. Outcomes may vary, and your health professional will advise you about the factors which could affect your outcome. Always read the instructions for use. Not all products are available in all countries. Please contact your local Cochlear representative for product information.

Views expressed are those of the individual. Consult your health professional to determine if you are a candidate for Cochlear technology.

Cochlear, Hear now. And always, Kanso, Nucleus, True Wireless, and the elliptical logo are either trademarks or registered trademarks of Cochlear Limited.

The Cochlear Nucleus 7 Sound Processor is compatible with Apple and Android devices. The Cochlear Nucleus Smart App is available on App Store and Google Play. For compatibility information visit [www.cochlear.com/compatibility](http://www.cochlear.com/compatibility)

The Cochlear Nucleus Kanso Sound Processor with Aqua+ is dust and water resistant to level IP68 of the International Standard IEC60529 when used with LR44 alkaline or nickel metal hydride disposable batteries. Refer to the relevant User Guide for more information.

The Cochlear Nucleus 7 Sound Processors with Aqua+ and Aqua+ Coil are dust and water resistant to level IP68 of the International Standard IEC60529 when you use a Cochlear Standard Rechargeable Battery Module or Cochlear Compact Rechargeable Battery Module. Refer to the relevant User Guide for more information.

The Cochlear Nucleus 7 and Kanso 2 sound processors are compatible with Apple and Android devices. For compatibility information visit [www.cochlear.com/compatibility](http://www.cochlear.com/compatibility). The Cochlear Nucleus Smart App is available on App Store and Google Play. For compatibility information visit [www.cochlear.com/compatibility](http://www.cochlear.com/compatibility)

ForwardFocus is a clinician-enabled, user-controlled feature.

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^The Aqua Accessory and the Aqua+ sleeve are dust and water resistant to level IP68 of the International Standard IEC60529 and can be continuously submerged under water to a depth of up to 3 metres for up to 2 hours. Refer to the relevant User Guide for more information.

\*The Cochlear Headband is a retention option that holds the Aqua+ more securely on your head. It has a built-in anti-slip strip. And is useful for children or when doing physical activities. Simply measure your child's head to find the right size in our online store. The headband is compatible with Nucleus® Kanso® and Osia® 2 Sound Processors.

\*\*The Cochlear™ Safety Line is available in a variety of lengths and with or without a hair clip. Attach a Safety Line that clips onto your child's hair to reduce the risk of losing your sound processor.

^^ The Cochlear Nucleus Kanso 2 is not available in all markets. Contact your local customer service team or hearing healthcare professional for more information.

Cochlear™ Nucleus® implant systems are intended for the treatment of moderately severe to profound hearing loss.