

# Deaf children with cochlear implants report similar quality of life to that of normal-hearing kids

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Profoundly deaf children with cochlear implants to help them to hear rate their quality of life equal to their normal-hearing peers, according to new research from UT Southwestern Medical Center auditory specialists.

In addition, the earlier a child is implanted with a cochlear device and the longer he or she wears the device, the better overall quality of life the child reports and the more successful the child is in school, according to the findings, published in the February issue of *Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery*.

"Wearing [cochlear implants](#) doesn't seem to create greater psychosocial problems overall for their users," said Dr. Betty Loy, clinical research manager in the Department of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery and lead author of the study.

Cochlear implants are small electronic devices that are surgically implanted in the [inner ear](#) and activated by another device worn outside the ear. They bypass damaged or diseased parts of the ear by directly stimulating the auditory nerve, which is connected to the brain.

Researchers surveyed 88 families of children with cochlear implants, including parents. They then compared the responses with normal-hearing peers in two age groups: 8- to 11-year-olds and 12- to 16-year-

olds. Quality-of-life factors assessed included physical, mental and emotional health; self-esteem; relationships with family and friends; and school performance.

Researchers found that younger cochlear implant recipients rated overall quality of life more positively than those who were in the older age group, although that may simply reflect greater adolescent angst, Dr. Loy said.

The survey results also confirmed that parents are generally accurate in gauging their child's perception of quality of life, although they slightly overestimated the satisfaction levels at school for older children.

According to the [Food and Drug Administration](#), approximately 188,000 people worldwide have received cochlear implants as of 2009. In the U.S., roughly 41,500 adults and 25,500 children have received them.

Provided by UT Southwestern Medical Center

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