One of the best ways to positively support your child following first fitting of the speech processor is to ensure that the processor is always working and that your child wears it during all waking hours. The following are suggestions for adapting to the implant and making it a natural part of your child’s life.

Establish a Routine

Your child should get into the habit of wearing the speech processor. You can encourage this by establishing routines or habits concerning the storage, handling, and use of the speech processor. For example:

• Keep the speech processor in the same place each night so that your child can go and get it each morning.

• For example: You can buy or make a little “bed” or tent for the child’s implant to “sleep” in at night in its case. Or maybe it “sleeps” in the sock drawer. It doesn’t matter as long as it is always the same place.

• Put the processor on your child at the same time each day (as soon as your child wakes up).

• Put the processor on while standing or sitting (pick one) in the same location every day (next to the bed, on a specific chair).

• Secure the processor properly so that your child can move around confidently without fearing it will fall off. You could even use a specific word or phrase to indicate you are done putting it on (“It’s magic!” or “Perfect” or “Now you can hear like Super Man!”).

• It is useful to use an ear-mould to keep the processor in place and to fasten the processor to your child’s shoulder (this helps to prevent the processor from falling to the floor). MED-EL offers many wearing options (e.g. angled battery pack, remote battery pack).

• All family members should be firm but loving with the child. If the child starts to make a game of pulling off the processor, react in a firm, consistent way. Make it plain to the child that this is not acceptable behavior.

• Do not reward the child for wearing the processor or afford him any special treatment; just accept this as “normal” behavior and your child will, too.

Record Your Observations

It is important that you can report well about your child’s reactions to the speech processor at your child’s next fitting appointment. This is so that the audiologist can take appropriate action. To be able to do this you need to closely observe your child’s reactions to the speech processor and record these daily in a diary or notebook that you can later bring with you to appointments with your audiologist. Some things you may want to pay close attention to are:
Your Child’s New Cochlear Implant: What to do after First Fitting

Does he or she...

- Ask for the processor?
- Start to vocalize as soon as it is switched on?
- Tell you when the batteries are flat or when it has not been switched on?
- Tell you if sounds are too loud by refusing to wear the processor, blinking eyes or startling?
- Alert to some sounds?

Your child will probably enjoy wearing the processor within a few days of first fitting. If this is not the case, discuss this with your audiologist.

It is usual for children to start to alert to sounds and learn to recognize some sounds within the first few weeks of use. Reactions often observed are:

- swaying to music
- increased interest in TV
- more frequent vocalizations, and
- babbling/uttering more varied sounds.

What about the other ear?

If your child was used to wearing a hearing aid on the ear opposite the cochlear implant, your audiologist may advise you to have him continue wearing it as soon as he is up and about after the cochlear implant operation. Some audiologists may recommend removing the hearing aid for a period of time after the first fitting of the speech processor so that parents can more clearly observe responses with just the cochlear implant. If your child has useful residual hearing on the unoperated ear it is beneficial to continue using the hearing aid. Using a speech processor on one ear and a hearing aid on the other ear may help your child to locate sounds and may improve hearing for low pitched sounds.