

# Cochlear Family

SPECIAL EDITION COVID-19 SUPPORT

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# Working from home

## Six tips to make it easier

**F**OLLOWING recent world events, working from home has become a new reality for many people regardless of the profession or industry you work in. We spoke to cochlear implant recipients who are working remotely to find out their top tips to help make it work for you.

### 1 Use video conferencing where possible

Phone calls can be challenging for people with hearing loss – especially

when calls involve groups of people.

Tom W, who works in search and rescue and is regularly involved in staff meetings, uses video conferencing as it allows him to use visual cues such as lip reading, which makes it easier to follow the conversation.

"Since my colleagues are sitting directly in front of their laptops, each pops up on the screen which makes it easier to follow the conversation," said Tom, who also recommends using a larger monitor if possible.

"As well as using Skype, my department installed Microsoft Team this week so employees could conduct meetings remotely and not be exposed to potential hazards like COVID-19."

"These resources are awesome and compatible with my Nucleus 7s via Bluetooth® is an absolute game-changer for me as much of my job is handling and dealing with people."

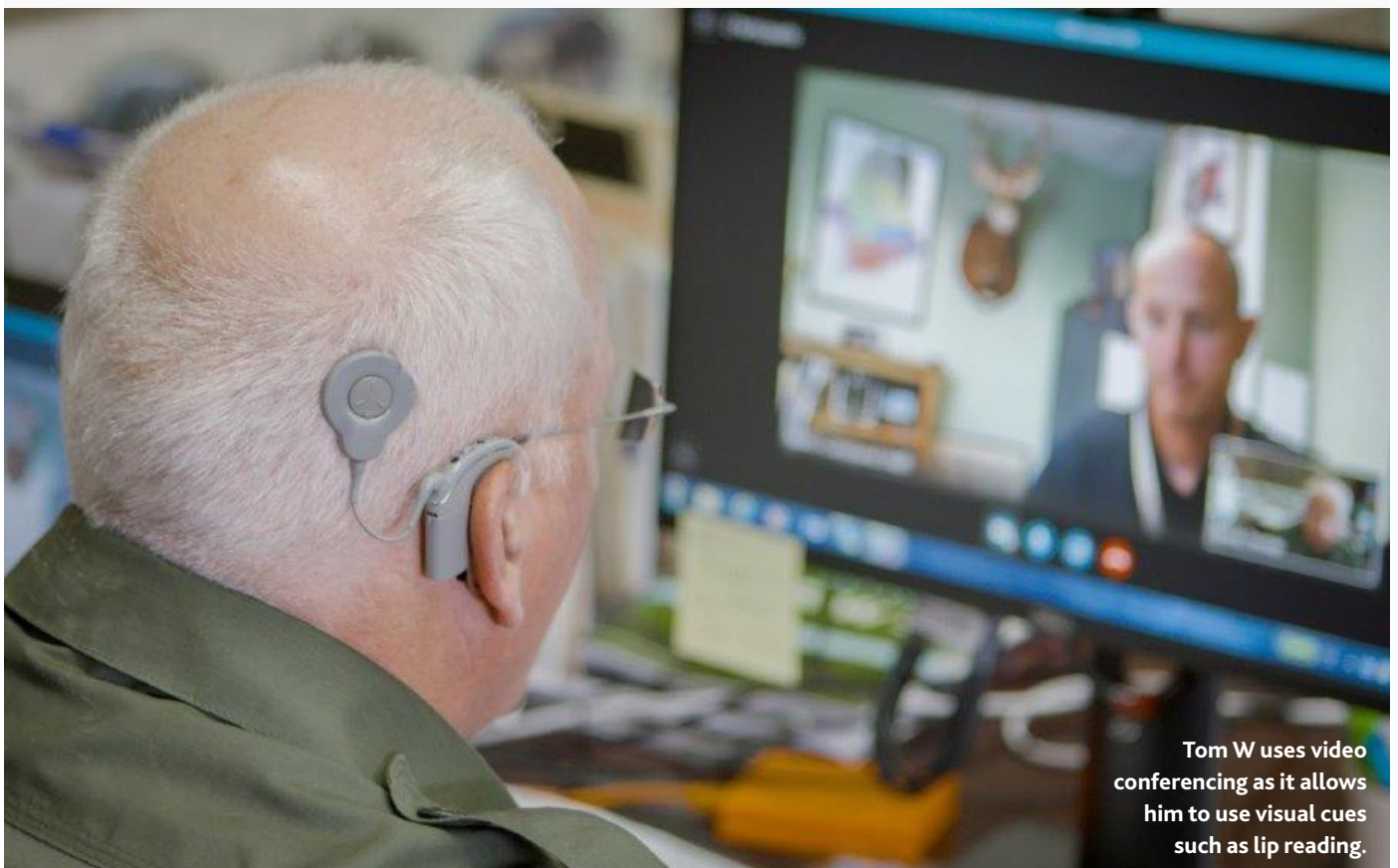
### 2 Ask for an agenda and documents ahead of a conference call

Greg W is an electrical engineer and bilateral Cochlear™ Implant recipient who regularly participates in teleconferences with colleagues around the world.

Greg's number one tip for conference calls is to always ask for an agenda from the meeting organiser.

"While this is generally good business practice, it helps you to prepare background information on the topics to be discussed and provides some boundaries on what might be said during the meeting.

It's also useful to ask that presentation materials, even in draft ▶



Tom W uses video conferencing as it allows him to use visual cues such as lip reading.

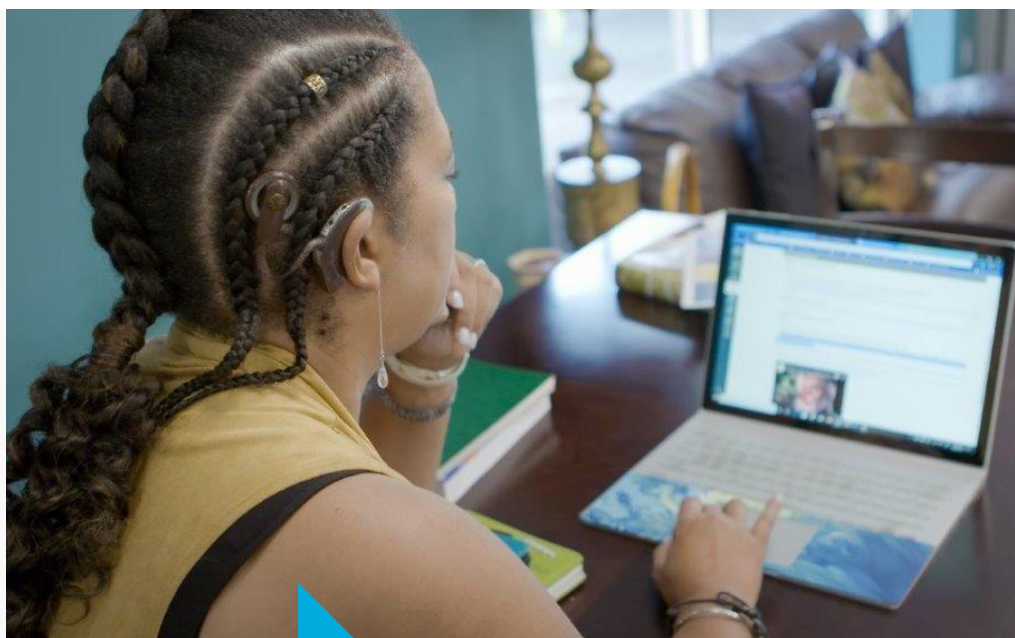
form, can be provided before the meeting so you don't have to read the text on the screen as well as concentrate on what is being said by the presenter and others," Greg advises.

### 3 Follow up meetings with an email

Communication is vital at a time like this for Lynn O who is an assisted care administrator: "My role involves coordinating care for elderly residents who live independently in subsidised housing communities. During the pandemic, it is my goal to keep our residents safe at home so they do not need to be hospitalised.

For phone calls, I use my phone clip, but I also make sure that I follow up with an email or a text just for clarification to make sure that nothing else was missed or misunderstood in the conversation," said Lynn, who uses Cochlear Nucleus® 6 and 7 Sound Processors.

Other tools, such as instant messenger apps, also allow you to supplement your verbal communications with follow-up written communication.



**'For phone calls, I use my phone clip, but I also make sure that I follow up with an email or a text just for clarification to make sure that nothing else was missed or misunderstood in the conversation.'** Lynn O

### 4 Stream your phone calls

Recruitment Consultant and Cochlear Baha® recipient, Kelly J, says she uses her cell phone to stream calls to her sound processor and connects

her Cochlear Wireless Mini Microphone 2+ to her computer to listen to videos and stream webinars. "I just plug it in and off I go," said Kelly. "It's perfectly clear and super easy."

If you use a Cochlear Nucleus 7 Sound Processor or Baha 5 Sound Processor, you can stream business calls and videos directly from a compatible Apple or Android™ device using the Smart App. If you use an Android device or another smartphone, you can stream calls to your Baha 5 or Nucleus 7 Sound Processor by using the Cochlear Wireless Phone Clip.

"With the Phone Clip, I am able to take telephone calls all day long on my cell phone," said Jack Judge who is an electrical contractor. "What's nice about the phone clip is I don't have to pick up the telephone, I can just hit the button and answer the call."

Streaming calls from your iPhone also means if you're in the garden or garage while working from home, you are always contactable: "The streaming function of the Nucleus 7 means I won't miss the call," said Tom. ▶

## FAQs to work remotely

**WORKING** in search and rescue in the US north east, Tom W needs to be contactable 24/7 to respond to accidents and participate in video-conference calls with teams in the field.

But online meetings and phone calls can be a challenge for people with cochlear implants. In this Q&A, Tom, who is a bilateral Cochlear™ Implant recipient, shares his practical tips to help you work remotely.

### Q How has COVID-19 affected your working circumstances?

We have had a number of long phone calls recently. To adhere with guidelines to flatten the curve of COVID-19, we were directed by management not to meet in person with a group of our size.

### Q How are you communicating with your colleagues while working remotely?

We are using Skype to hear weekly updates every Monday morning from my Commander. We're also using video conferencing for our more important and urgent discussions. As well as Skype, my department installed Microsoft Teams this week so employees could conduct our meetings remotely.

These resources are awesome and my Nucleus 7 Sound Processor are Bluetooth®-compatible. Being able to stream and hear clearly is an absolute game-changer for me as much of my job is handling and dealing with people. ▶



## 5 Stream phone calls or video calls directly to your sound processor

Streaming is not only powerful to take phone calls, but also when participating in video conferences.

"I was on a 2.5 hour Skype call this week which involved a very large group of people and a PowerPoint presentation. I could not see the presenter, just his computer screen. The meeting organiser disabled the audio on his end, which enabled us to dial in using our cell phones for the audio," said Tom.

"It was awesome as my Bluetooth enables the sound to go right into my processors, which gives a stereo effect. I'd never had a conference meeting like that, but it was good."

## 6 Let people know about your hearing loss

"Let your colleagues and customers know you have hearing loss and the types of situations – like people using their phones hand-free or talking simultaneously – that are challenging for you. People can be very accommodating, provided they are aware of your challenges," said Greg W.

Lynn agrees: "In meetings, be upfront and tell people that you didn't hear what they said," said Lynn. "Even if not during a meeting, afterwards say: 'I didn't hear what you said, do you mind repeating it for me?'"

Kelly adds that it's also important to let colleagues know if you experience particular challenges: "If you struggle with phone calls but don't communicate this, they are going to wonder why you're not taking their calls."

Tom says he still struggles with larger group calls because of the distance between the microphone and each speaker in a large room.

His advice is to make sure you are sitting in a closed room to eliminate your background noise and remember to remind your co-workers that you have a hearing issue: "I simply remind them to sit a little closer to the microphone." ●



Tom W in his home office.

## Q Do you use other tools to help you?

A large monitor is useful. We have at least five people from different geographic locations in the Skype meetings. Each person pops up on the screen when they talk, which makes it easier to follow the conversation.

Lots of chit chat and interruptions make it harder to hear, but when I ask them to each speak individually, it's much easier for me to follow the conversation. People are very understanding.

## Q Do you find conference calls challenging?

### What are your tips?

I don't have separate speakers for my laptop so at times I strain to hear through the built-in laptop speaker. To help hear better, I turn my volume and sensitivity up on my iPhone which controls my Nucleus 7 sound processors.

## Q How do you manage with a large group of people on a video conference call?

The larger group calls continue to be tough for me due to people forgetting to speak into the microphone when they are talking or sitting in a large room.

My co-workers are awesome but sometimes they forget I have a hearing issue. I simply remind them to get closer to the microphone: 'Remember that I hear well, but sometimes the background noise bothers me. Can you sit a little closer to the mic?' Ultimately it just comes down to good communication with my peers.

I always close my office door to

eliminate background noise on my end. Auxiliary speakers might help some people if the call was not streamed via Bluetooth.

## Q Do you combine technology to make it easier?

Yes, using my own phone for the audio when on a Skype call makes a big difference. I was on a 2.5 hour Skype call this week, which involved a very large group of people and a PowerPoint presentation. I could not see the presenter, just his computer screen and dialled in with our cell phones for the audio.

It was awesome as my Bluetooth enables the sound to go right into my processors, which gives a stereo effect. I'd never had a conference-call like that, but it was good.

## Q What's your advice for people who are new to video conferencing?

The programs commonly used in workplaces are straight-forward to set up – even if you have only basic computer skills.

We were asked to install new software this week to support a video call from my Major. I didn't know much about it, but we will all need to use it for while we work remotely due to COVID-19. Once folks set it up and start using it, it will get easier.

## Q Do you use other apps or messaging platforms?

I use FaceTime a lot. I love that and it's extremely easy to use and hear. Again, with Bluetooth, I get the stereo effect, which is awesome. ●

## Tips for parents

# Talking with children at mealtimes

**W**ITH most people spending more time at home recently, many parents are looking for fun ways to spend time with their children.

If your child has a cochlear implant, you can use this time to help develop your child's listening and language skills. Simply by constantly talking to them and repeating words many times a day. Cooking together is a great opportunity to do that.

"A great piece of advice that was given to us early in our journey with Dylan's hearing was to constantly narrate and have conversations at home. Just constantly chit-chatting and talking about what he's learning and what is in the world," said Tracy, the mother of 10-year-old Dylan, who received a cochlear implant when he was two years old.

Dylan loves cooking and Tracy uses meal prep as a chance to chat: "We'll get our ingredients together before we make a recipe and I'll have him help me count and measure – it's just constant language. He is obsessed with cooking so that's a nice way for us to spend time together."

### TOP TIPS FOR VERY YOUNG CHILDREN

The words children hear the most are the words they will learn first. Common first words during feeds and mealtimes are: 'more', 'all gone', and 'milk'.

For very young children, take the opportunity to talk while you're breastfeeding or bottle feeding. Everyone uses different phrases, but you could say something like: "Oh, you're hungry! Time for milk. Let's get some milk. Are you ready for milk? Yes, yes you are! Mmmm, yum yum. Drink your milk."



## How to chat during food prep

**CHILDREN** usually enjoy getting involved in making food and this is a great way to build their language. Experts advise parents to communicate in a 'listening first' kind of way: say the words before you show an object or do an action. Here are some things you can talk about when preparing food together.



Name the ingredients you need to prepare the meal.



Before you start cooking, explain each step in the recipe.



Describe the different foods – talk about the colour, taste, texture.



If something goes wrong in the cooking process, talk about how you can fix it.



Talk about how you use each of the cooking utensils.



Use a variety of words during food preparation and mealtimes.

*Shhhh, it's milk time. All finished."*

Use your own words and use words at a level only slightly above your child's language level, that is, add on one to two words. So if your child is using single words, such as 'more', you could say 'more milk'.

So, although it's not easy to be indoors and socially distancing with your children in these challenging times, by turning home activities into a learning opportunity, you're helping your child develop the skills they need on their hearing journey. ●





# How music is lifting spirits and tips to get started

**I**TALIANS have made headlines as they played music from their balconies as a way to unite and connect during quarantine measures to slow the spread of COVID-19.

As well as creating emotional connections, music plays other valuable roles and can benefit people with cochlear implants by enhancing listening skills, which can lead to flow-on effects

such as improved communication and social wellbeing.

In this Q&A, Dr Chi Yhun Lo (PhD)\*, a researcher in the field of auditory training for people with hearing loss, explains how music connects people and can have added benefits for cochlear implant recipients. With many people now facing social distancing and staying at home, he also shares tips to help you reconnect with music.

**Q** Were you surprised to see people playing music from their balconies in Italy amid the COVID-19 pandemic?

**A** We are social beings and having to lock down and practise social-distancing is very unnatural and uncomfortable for most of us. Using novel ways to reach out and connect to others with the power of music is wonderful and a way for people to connect with each other.

**Q** What role does music play in people's lives?

**A** Music is the perfect medicine to help us reconnect and provide emotional sustenance during these isolating times. Sing, dance, laugh, and play!

Music helps us draw emotional connections between people and communities.

**Q** What's the role of music for people with cochlear implants? ▶

◀ **A** For cochlear implant recipients, there are specific benefits as music is an excellent tool that may also enhance listening skills – particularly around emotional prosody<sup>1,2</sup> (e.g. the emotional aspects of speech that let us identify if someone is happy, scared, angry, etc.), which could have flow-on effects such as improved communication and wellbeing.<sup>3</sup>

## **Q** What can people with cochlear implants do at home to enjoy music?

**A** The number one tip is simply to start! Engage with music, whether that is listening to or playing music. But here are five tips to consider:

1. Start simple. Music is wide and varied, but try listening to music with less instruments/musical elements, rather than more. If you enjoy classical music, start with quartets rather than orchestras. If you enjoy pop music, start with simple acoustic arrangements with prominent vocals.
2. Listen to your favourite albums and songs. Even if it might not sound quite like you remember, use that memory to your advantage.
3. Use imagery. Videos of musicians playing are a great way to use your eyes to help your ears.
4. If you are going to start learning an instrument, I would recommend an instrument in which the notes are in visible order. For example, piano is a good start, as each key is a different note, with left to right corresponding with low (bass) to high (treble) notes.
5. Apps are a great way to engage with music, as they can be used anywhere, anytime. For example, Cochlear's **Bring Back the Beat™ app** is a fun way to get back into music.

Try Cochlear's new interactive music training tool, the Bring Back the Beat™ app designed to help you practise and reconnect to music. Download free now from: **Apple App Store** or **Google Play**. ●

*\*Dr Chi Yhun Lo is a paid consultant to Cochlear Limited.*

**“Music is the perfect medicine to help us reconnect and provide emotional sustenance during these isolating times. Sing, dance, laugh, and play!”** Dr Chi Yhun Lo (PhD)

IMAGE COURTESY OF MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

**Dr Chi Yhun Lo** recently completed his PhD exploring the “Benefits of music training for children with hearing loss” at Macquarie University in Australia.

**References:** <sup>1</sup>Fuller CD, Galvin JJ, Maat B, Başkent D, Free RH. Comparison of two music training approaches on music and speech perception in Cochlear implant users. *Trends Hear* [Internet]. 2018 Jan–Dec [cited 2020 March 31]; 22: 1–22. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2331216518765379>

<sup>2</sup>Lo CY, McMahon CM, Looi V, Thompson WF. Melodic contour training and its effect on speech in noise, consonant discrimination, and prosody perception for Cochlear implant recipients. *Behav Neurol [Special Issue]* [Internet]. 2015 Sep 30 [cited 2020 March 31]; 1–10. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1155/2015/352869>

<sup>3</sup>Dritsakis G, van Besouw RM, O'Meara A. Impact of music on the quality of life of cochlear implant users: a focus group study. *Cochlear Implants Int* [Internet]. 2017 Jul [cited 2020 March 31]; 18(4):207–15. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14670100.2017.1303892>



# RECONNECT WITH THE JOY OF MUSIC

Research shows that focused attention and listening practice can actually improve your appreciation of music.<sup>1</sup>

The **BRING BACK THE BEAT™** app can help you get started. Learn how to reconnect with the joy of music through interactive game play.

**GET STARTED NOW!**



- Download your free trial version from the Apple App Store or Google Play!
- Log in using your Cochlear™ account details or follow the in-app instructions to create an account.

1. Looi V, Cfeller K, Driscoll V. Music appreciation and training for Cochlear implant recipients: a review. *Semin Hear*. 2012 Nov 1;3(4):307–334.

## 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.

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.

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The Cochlear Nucleus Smart App is available on App Store and Google Play.

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

Cochlear Baha 5 sound processors are

compatible with iPhone, iPad and iPod touch. \*For compatibility information visit [www.cochlear.com/compatibility](http://www.cochlear.com/compatibility)

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Baha implant systems are intended for the treatment of moderate to profound hearing loss.

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



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

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