

I am a late deafened adult and lived deaf for 15-20 years. However, a Cochlear Implant has restored me back to the hearing world. Recent tests show I cannot get more/better hearing from just the one Cochlear implant. But having two implants will improve my hearing, make it easier for me to hear, help with sound direction and hearing in background noise as well as my ability to listen to music (the sound track of life).

But you know what! I can't have a second implant unless I pay the cost myself (>\$40,000) or take out private Health insurance. Health insurance for me and my husband (who has a chronic kidney condition caused in his youth from a public swimming pool) is over \$360 per month just at a time when our income is diminishing. In addition I can't get processor upgrades (about \$8,000 each) as hearing technology improves unless I'm in a health fund. To top it off I need about 10-15 batteries a week and this will double with two implants. I need regular programming of my processor to ensure optimum hearing levels and once my processor is out of warranty any repairs will be at my own expense.

I am now 58 years old and as an older Australian finding it hard to get work, so paying for a second implant myself is out of the question and the Health insurance option is causing financial stress. If I want to insure my Cochlear Implant processor against loss this costs me an additional \$350 per year on top of my contents. I had to choose not to take that out this year because we simply can't afford it.

Hearing is so incredibly important. Without hearing a child easily learn language. If we lose our hearing later in life we cannot participate in the world as we knew it so we become isolated and other health issues often occur (eg mental health/depression). I personally suffered from and at times still suffer from depression caused by the frustrations of hearing loss issues (losing jobs, not finding jobs, being undervalued, isolated and sidelined).

I would like to see Hearing Health recognised as essential to our well being – a vital part of life. While there are many younger people with hearing problems and these are important. The majority of people with hearing loss are getting older (the baby boomers!) and this is going to be come a huge problem in years to come.

For important discussions on hearing issues please go to <http://www.bellaonline.com/site/deafness> where I am the deafness editor.

Regards  
Felicity Bleckly