



Tips and Hints!

Karin Jamieson became deaf because she contracted Meniere's disease. She is a recipient of bi-lateral cochlear implants. Today she is an active member of the Cochlear Awareness Network in Orange

Me and my helmet(s) OR Tips and Hints for playing sport if you have a cochlear implant

In telling my story for the CAN website, one thing I wanted to do was to demonstrate that you can have a life again after implant, including sport. I have been a keen hockey player since I discovered the sport in first year High School, and was happy to report that one month post first implant I was able to strap on a rugby helmet and get back into the game.

What I didn't report was that I actually hated that helmet! I periodically whined about it but certainly wasn't going to take the field without it - it's clear to me that I would be all kinds of fool to jeopardise all the wonderful work for my implant just because I didn't like wearing the helmet. This year I swapped to a soccer helmet, with very positive improvements.

Given that my attitude to the rugby helmet was a personal one, I would like to highlight both the positive and negative aspects of both types of headgear:

Positives - Rugby helmet	Negatives – Rugby helmet
Protecting me: I've had a ball strike my head very close to the implant area, and no damage was sustained to either the processor or implant	Sound quality: Wearing a rugby helmet reduced the quality of sound and my ability to hear things directionally. This was more noticeable after my second implant when directional hearing improved immensely.
Protecting my processor: The helmet kept the processor/s in place despite any jostling etc, allowing me to continue to play without the need to reseal my processor.	Comfort: I overheated badly under the helmet – whilst hockey is a winter sport, running around it hot work and we play March to September.
Rain protection: Limited water protection in light rain	Social: I didn't enjoy being the only person on the field wearing such headgear

Positives – Soccer helmet	Negatives – Soccer helmet
<p>Protecting me: The implant zone is well covered and has also protected me against a ball strike; no damage was sustained</p>	<p>Risks to processor: The processor is not wholly covered and may be susceptible to damage if a ball was at an angle that allowed impact.</p>
<p>Hearing quality: It allows greater capacity for hearing and directional capability</p>	<p>Less rain protection: Less protection in terms of water protection than the rugby helmet</p>
<p>Comfort: It is comfortable and very lightweight. It allows heat loss as there is no covering over the skull</p>	<p>Not secure: The helmet is not kept in place by any strap so could be subject to dislodgement</p>
<p>Rain protection: It has been designed to draw moisture away from the head</p>	
<p>Social: It actually looks like more like a fortified headband than a helmet</p>	
<p>Defensive hockey players are starting to wear head protection in certain situations and though not the same, it follows that line of thinking. (I play defence)</p>	

I have tried to deal with the water protection issue by using either a ski headband or a sports headband. I did this with the rugby helmet and continue with the soccer helmet. Headbands have external moisture repellent qualities as well as the fabric lining which also draws moisture away from the head. If it is raining I wear one of the headbands under the helmet. I have also found it important to pull as much hair as possible out from under the helmet or headband/helmet combination, as it allows the wicking of moisture to occur and will also cause rain to run off.

What advice would you offer to other implant recipients who wish to play an active sport?

Sports headbands are a wonderful way to keep processors in place when I'm active – gym, jogging, walking, gardening or doing home renovations. Additionally, I have insured the processors – with an active lifestyle, there could be damage.

Rugby helmets and sports headbands are easily available at any sports store. For the soccer helmet, I was given a website to look up:

<http://www.cochlearamericas.com/Support/2235.asp> which led me to: www.full90.com.

They are an American company with no outlets in Australia (do I see a business opportunity?) but handled my order over the internet quickly and efficiently.

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