

Argentina

Caregiver Name: Mónica
Age at Implantation: 1

Child: Celina
Age Today: 17

Hello, my name is Mónica and I am Celina's mother. Celina has bilateral cochlear implants. She became deaf after having meningitis when she was only five months old.

I will never forget the day the doctor told me that my daughter had profound bilateral hearing loss and that she would need a series of tests because she may have consequences from the meningitis. I remember feeling that I could not imagine a future for her. There was simply too much information for one mother to process at once.



I knew nothing about hearing loss. I didn't know cochlear implants existed. I thought hearing aids were only for elderly people and I had never heard of something called auditory-verbal therapy. The only image in my mind was of someone who could not hear or speak. I started looking for an ENT specialist who was an expert in hearing loss. That was the first time I learned about cochlear implants and that many children with implants do very well and live lives just like any other child.

They recommended that Celina started using hearing aids as soon as possible so her auditory nerves would not become inactive and to prepare her for a possible cochlear implant. They also advised me to begin auditory rehabilitation therapy.

The only sentence I truly remember from their explanation was "we teach children with hearing loss how to listen". **Fortunately, they helped me a great deal.**

Everything seemed almost magical, perhaps too good to be true, but I placed my daughter in the hands of the specialists with complete trust. I was still in shock and unable to make decisions on my own. She was my first child and it was a lot to take in. I managed to get the hearing aids when Celina was just seven months old. We began auditory verbal therapy while we waited for the day of her cochlear implant surgery.

And the 'miracle' that had been promised in some way slowly began to happen. When Celina was just one year and three months old, she underwent surgery in both ears. **The operation was successful, it was not traumatic at all and her recovery was very quick.** The day after the surgery, she was already walking around as if nothing had happened.

I knew it would be a long and demanding road, but one full of hope. After her implants were activated, she began responding to sounds. Later, she started dancing to music, speaking and singing. I learned to act as a co-therapist. At home we always spoke to her normally and still do. Time passed and she never stopped progressing. I never stopped working with her or taking her to therapy. **Important advice for parents: never stop taking your child to their therapy sessions!** It requires a lot of sacrifice, but the reward is enormous.

Today, my daughter is 17 years old. I can say that the expectations I once had when I first heard the diagnosis were shattered and became a beautiful reality that I see every day.

Celina has given me the great joy of becoming the person I always imagined she would be. She manages very well in life. She is independent, sensitive, cheerful, strong and thinks for herself. She works hard to overcome challenges. She has just moved into her fifth year at secondary school. She is also rebellious, stubborn, restless and causes the kinds of problems any teenager does. And yes, she is deaf. That was the only thing I never expected. But today, it does not make any difference from the daughter I had always dreamed of.

Writing her story comforts me and I believe that sharing it may help someone else, especially during those moments when it feels like your strength is gone. But it is not true. Strength never disappears, sometimes it just fades for a moment before returning so we can keep moving forward.

Thanks to her implants, Celina has learned to listen, process, remember, understand and speak. She enjoys music and every sound of life. She plays the guitar, plays sports and loves to dance. She can express what she needs and what she feels.

It is incredible to say that she hears through her devices that she takes great care of and have made such a difference in her life and ours.