

Gene therapy can restore hearing to deaf people

In two months' time, a group of profoundly deaf people could be able to hear again, thanks to the world's first gene therapy trial for deafness.

The volunteers, who lost their hearing through damage or disease, will get an injection of a harmless virus containing a gene that should trigger the regrowth of the sensory receptors in the ear.

The idea is that the method will return a more natural sense of hearing than other technologies can provide. Hearing aids merely amplify sounds, while cochlear implants transform sound waves into electrical waves that the brain interprets, but they don't pick up all of the natural frequencies. This means people can find it difficult to distinguish many of the nuances in voices and music.

"The holy grail is to give people natural hearing back," says Hinrich Staecker at the University of Kansas Medical Center, who is leading the trial. "That's what we hope to do – we are essentially repairing the ear rather than artificially imitating what it does."

Read the full, original story: [Deaf people get gene tweak to restore natural hearing](#)