

Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT)



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HEALTH • EDUCATION • RESEARCH صحة • تعليم • بحوث

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Introduction

This leaflet will try to answer some of your questions about Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT). Do not be worried if you cannot read through this entire leaflet, just choose out the points that seem important at the time and come back to it later. If you would like someone to explain the information in this leaflet or you have questions and concerns, please ask your attending doctor or assigned nurse to help you.

What is Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT)?

Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) is a well-established treatment. An electrical current is passed through the brain to produce an artificial seizure (epileptic fit) that affects the entire brain, including the parts which control thinking, mood, appetite and sleep. Repeated treatments alter the patterns of chemical substances in the brain. This helps you begin to recover from your illness. ECT is only given under a general anesthetic and with drugs to relax the body's muscles to avoid inflicting harm on you during the seizure.

Why is it a recommended treatment for me?

ECT is given for many reasons. Your attending doctor may recommend that you be treated with ECT if:

- You have had a moderate – severe depression or other resistant mental health problems for some time and a number of different treatments have been tried without success.
- You have tried several different medications but have had to stop them because of the side effects.
- You have responded well to ECT in the past.
- Your life is in danger because you are not eating or drinking enough, or you feel so bad you may be thinking of harming and or killing yourself.

For most people, ECT will produce short-term improvement, but it does act more quickly than antidepressant medication. The improvements produced by ECT will usually need to be maintained with medication.

Will I have to give my consent?

At some stage before the treatment starts, you will be asked by your doctor to sign a consent form for ECT. Before you sign the form the doctor should explain what the treatment involves, the benefits, any alternative treatments and why you are having it. Also, the doctor should be available to answer any questions you may have about the treatment. When you sign the form, you will be agreeing to have up to a certain number of treatments.

Can ECT be given to me without my permission?

If you are too ill to give your consent, this means that you may be suicidal, convinced that you do not deserve to be treated, or possibly eating or drinking too little. In these circumstances ECT may be given to you without your consent, provided that you have been assessed as being unable to make a decision about treatment for yourself at the time of assessment. For this to happen, two consultants must agree that you are seriously ill; that the treatment is necessary, and that you are unable to make a decision for yourself regarding your treatment. In this case, a responsible family member or significant other who acts as your guardian can sign on your behalf or in their absence, the two consultants who did the assessment can sign for you.

Can I refuse to have ECT?

You can refuse to have ECT if you are well enough to decide for yourself. If you agree at first, you may withdraw your consent at any time, even before the first treatment has been given. The consent form does not commit you to having the treatment. It is a written record that an explanation has been given to you and that you understand to your satisfaction what is going to happen to you. Withdrawal of your consent to ECT will not in any way alter your right to continue treatment with the best alternative methods available.

What are the risks associated with ECT?

Contrary to what is popular ECT can be the safest and fastest method of treatment. It is a low risk procedure with similar risks to that of minor surgical procedures requiring short-acting general anesthetic.

What are the side effects of ECT?

- You may be confused just after you wake up from the treatment and this generally clears up within an hour or so.
- You may have memory problems. Dates, names of family/friends, addresses and telephone numbers may be temporarily forgotten. So try to postpone major decision making and keep a diary to record important events before your first treatment. If you notice memory loss persisting through the days after the treatment, please discuss this with your doctor.
- You may experience muscle stiffness which can be relieved by taking a warm bath, prescribed analgesics and doing mild exercises.
- Mild to moderate headache which can be relieved by cold compress application on your forehead, deep breathing exercise and prescribed analgesic
- Nausea/vomiting that can be relieved by eating small amounts of food and with prescribed antiemetics

What other treatments could I have?

Many people with mental health problems benefit from medications, psychological therapy treatment and counseling, either alone or together. Your doctor will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of other treatments with you and will try to answer any questions you may have.

What will happen if I have ECT?

Prior to your first ECT treatment:

- You will be assessed physically by the anesthetist and ECT doctor.
- All the necessary investigations will be done to make sure that there are no issues in conducting the treatment.

Before the Procedure:

- You will be asked not to eat or drink for a period of time the night before your treatment (usually 6-8 hours for solid food and 2-3 hours for liquids).
- You will be able to take certain morning medication as usual, with sips of water. Your doctor will advise you about which medicines, if any, you should take before the ECT procedure.
- Take a bath, wash your hair thoroughly. Remember to dry your hair and avoid applying hairspray/gel prior to the procedure.
- Wear loose clothes.
- Remove any jewelry or hair slides.
- Remove make-up and nail polish.
- Remove your eyeglasses or contact lenses.
- Remove your dentures. Advise the anesthetist of any loose teeth you have so necessary precautions can be taken.
- Empty your bladder 20 to 30 minutes before the procedure.
- Your blood pressure, pulse and temperature will also be checked prior to the ECT procedure.

Note: If you have any valuables

- They can be looked after by the relative accompanying you for your treatment, or department staff can store them securely until you are ready to leave the ECT suite.

During the Procedure

- A nurse will take you into the treatment room and introduce you to the team who will be looking after you.
- You will be asked to lie down on a bed and take your shoes off for treatment.
- Your ECT treatment team will explain the specific reasons for the use of monitoring equipment that will be attached to you.
- The anesthetist will ask you to hold out your hand so he can establish an intravenous line for the anesthetic injection.
- You will be given some oxygen to breathe as you go off to sleep. Once asleep you will receive your ECT.

After The Procedure

- When you wake up you will usually be in the recovery room area.
- There will be a nurse with you to make sure that you feel as comfortable as possible. At this point you will still have monitoring equipment attached to your body.
- If you are an outpatient, you will be reassessed by the anesthetist when you wake up and offered refreshments before you leave the ECT suite.

How many treatments are usually necessary?

ECT is usually given twice a week in a course of 6 or 12 sessions. It is not possible to say exactly how many treatments you may need. Some people get better with as few as two or three treatments; others may need up to twelve, and occasionally more.

Outpatient ECT

If you will be receiving ECT treatment as an outpatient, these precautionary measures should be followed until at least 24 hours after the anesthetic agent is administered:

- You should be in the company of responsible adult at all times
- A responsible adult should drive you back home
- Do not use machinery or appliances
- Should not be left solely in-charge of young children
- Do not drink alcohol
- Do not sign any legal documents
- Do not make any important decisions
- If you begin to feel unwell after discharge please go to the Emergency Department directly.
- If you are unable to attend your ECT treatment please contact: [REDACTED]
Electroconvulsive Therapy takes place in
ECT Suite, Psychiatry Hospital, Al-Montazah
Telephone: 44384615/44384640

Note: If you would like to visit the ECT suite prior to your first treatment, that can be arranged.

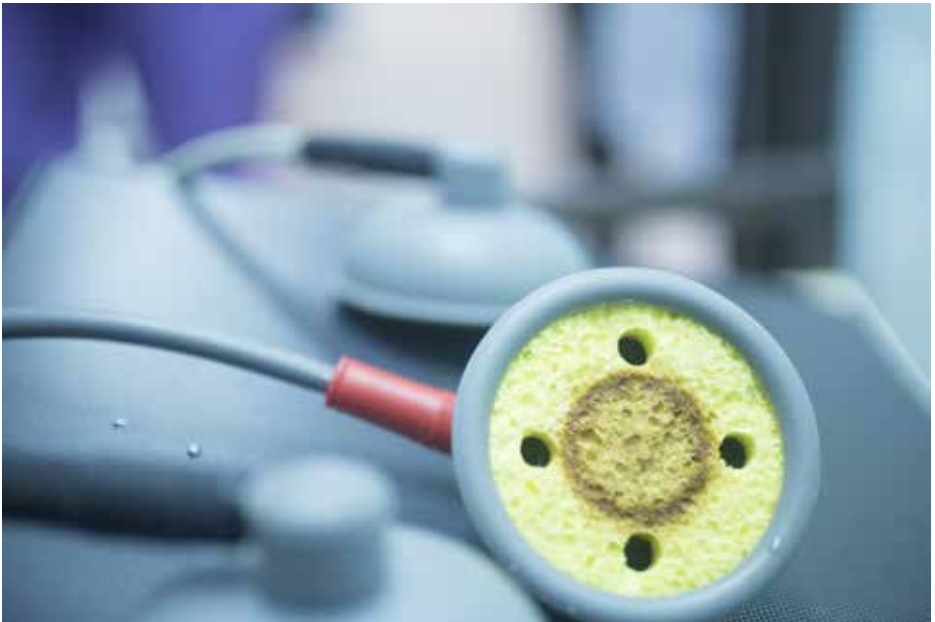
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What if I have a comment, suggestion, compliment or complaint about the service?

If you want to make a comment, suggestion, compliment or complaint you can:

- Talk to the people directly involved in your care
- Ask a member of staff for a feedback form

We are always looking at ways to improve services. Your feedback allows us to monitor the quality of our services and act upon issues that you bring to our attention.





Patient and Family Education

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