

What is Electroconvulsive Therapy?

Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is medical treatment for depression, bipolar disorder, catatonia, and some forms of schizophrenia. In this treatment, the patient goes to sleep under general anesthesia, receives muscle relaxants and oxygen, and then receives a brief electrical stimulation to the scalp. The resultant nerve-cell activity releases chemicals in the brain and helps restore normal functioning. ECT resembles cardioversion, a common medical procedure in which the heart is stimulated electrically in order to restore its normal functioning, but ECT uses a much smaller amount of electricity.

_____ is scheduled for Outpatient ECT.

Please check in at nurse's station on 2nd floor,
Psychiatric Services at MercyOne Medical Center.

Phone: 563-589-9299

(please call if you cannot keep your appointment)

Date: _____

Time: _____

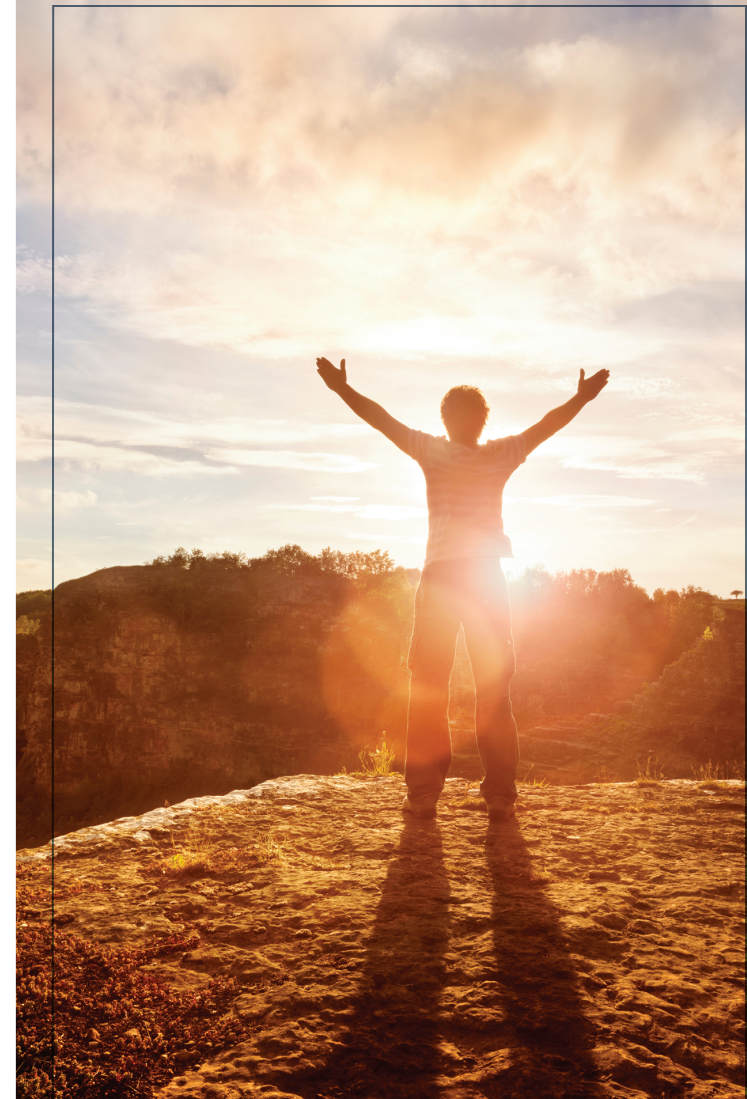
Instructions:

1. Nothing by mouth after midnight. Take no medication on the morning of treatment, unless directed. You may bring your morning meds to take with breakfast after ECT. Keep an updated list of your medications.
2. Bathe and shampoo the night before ECT. Do oral care in the morning of ECT, but do not swallow.
3. Arrange for your transportation. You may not drive on the day of ECT. Your transporter may call for you after 9 or 10 AM.



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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

ELECTROCONVULSIVE THERAPY (ECT)

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY & PSYCHOLOGY



IS ECT CONSIDERED A STANDARD PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT?

Yes, one that has been used for over 50 years. In 1990, the American Psychiatric Association reaffirmed ECT as effective for all types of major depression, manic-depressive illness, bipolar disorder, and some instances of schizophrenia.

WHAT ARE THE INDICATIONS FOR ECT?

Severe depression is the most frequent indication for ECT. Patients with this illness experience sadness and despair, have difficulty concentrating, lose their appetite and weight, sleep poorly, blame themselves, are unable to enjoy life, and often think of suicide. It is also used for bipolar disorder, catatonia, and some other conditions.

WHO GIVES ECT, AND WHERE?

ECT is given by a team of doctors, nurses, and nursing assistants, and an anesthesia specialist. Virtually all ECT is given in hospitals in a specially-equipped area, either on an inpatient or outpatient basis.

EXAMS

Prior to ECT, you will have a physical exam. This may include blood tests and a test to record your heart's electrical activity (electrocardiogram, or ECG). You may have a psychiatric exam to make sure you understand what will happen during the procedure and agree to have it (informed consent).

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE PROCEDURE?

- * You will be given the following:
 - A medicine to make you fall asleep (general anesthetic)
 - A medicine to relax your muscles (muscle relaxant)
- * An IV will be inserted into one of your veins.
- * ECT electrodes will be placed on one or both sides of your head.
- * Your healthcare provider will stimulate your brain with short electrical pulses to start a controlled seizure.
- * The electrodes will be removed.

HOW IS ECT GIVEN?

Prior to the treatment, you should have nothing by mouth after midnight. No medication should be taken on the morning of treatment, unless directed. You may bring your morning medications to take with breakfast after ECT. You should bathe and shampoo the night before ECT. Oral care should be taken, but don't swallow fluids. Transportation arrangements should be made, as you will be unable to drive for 24 hours after the procedure.

On the day of the procedure, a sleeping medication will be given and you will fall asleep. A muscle-relaxing medication is then given while you breathe pure oxygen. When your muscles are relaxed, a brief electrical charge is applied to the scalp, stimulating the brain into rhythmical activity that lasts about a minute and is accompanied by release of chemicals from nerves in the brain. Mild contractions of the muscles occur during this "convulsion." When it is over, you will be taken to a recovery area and observed by training staff until you awaken, usually in about 5-10 minutes.

HOW MANY TREATMENTS ARE GIVEN AND HOW OFTEN?

ECT is usually given two to three times a week, typically on Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning, for a total of 6 to 12 treatments. A few patients may require more than 12 treatments for maximum benefit.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF ECT?

Generally, this is a safe procedure. However, problems may occur, including:

- Headache.
- Muscle pain.
- Confusion.
- Nausea.
- Muscle aches.
- Changes in blood pressure or heart rhythm during treatment.
- Allergic reactions to medicines.
- Temporary short-term memory loss. This usually goes away several days to weeks after the procedure. Rarely, people have long term memory problems.
- Other risks, your doctor will discuss prior to your treatment.

CAN ECT CAUSE BRAIN DAMAGE?

The available evidence speaks against this possibility. Carefully-controlled animal studies have shown no evidence of brain damage from brief seizures as given with ECT, and sensitive brain-imaging studies performed months after ECT have shown no structural changes. The amount of electricity used raises brain temperature far less than 1/10th of a degree and cannot cause electrical injury.

DOES ECT CAUSE PERMANENT MEMORY LOSS?

Not in most people. Most importantly, ECT does not interfere with the ability to learn, and many studies have shown better learning after ECT than before it, probably because of improved concentration from relief of depression. A few patients, however, still have not regained some specific personal memories when tested six months or longer after receiving a form of treatment called bilateral ECT. Generally, these memories are for events in the months immediately preceding ECT.

Memory problems in patients with psychiatric illness result more often from medications, incompletely-treated illness, and aging.

MUST A PATIENT GIVE PERMISSION FOR ECT?

Virtually always, just as with any medical procedure. Most states require that informed consent for ECT be obtained in writing after an explanation of the procedure, its potential benefits, risks and side-effects, and a description of available alternative treatments. Of course, the patient can withdraw his consent at any time. Treatment of patients who have been declared incompetent by a court of law may require professional legal guidance.