

ECT Client and Family Education Booklet for both Inpatients and Outpatients



camh
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

– So you've been asked to consider ECT as part of your or your family member's treatment...

What is electroconvulsive therapy?

Electroconvulsive therapy or ECT is one of the oldest most effective treatments for depression. It is also used to treat mania, schizophrenia and delusional disorders. ECT can be used as a treatment to get people well from an acute illness and to maintain their improvement.

How does ECT work?

ECT is a safe and effective treatment for some forms of mental illness. As is the case with many medical treatments, the actual way that ECT relieves symptoms of illness is unknown. It is now believed that ECT affects some of the chemicals which transfer impulses or messages between nerve cells in the brain. It may correct some of the biochemical changes which accompany some mental illnesses. Research has shown that 80% of people who have ECT improve. This treatment often helps people who do not feel better after trying other treatments such as medications.



What happens first?

The psychiatrist will meet with you and your support person if you want someone with you. During this visit you will learn about the risks, benefits and plan that the psychiatrist believes is best for you. There is a DVD available to you explaining ECT in an in-depth visual fashion. Nursing staff are also available to meet with you for educational and emotional support while making this treatment decision.

Involved, Informed, and Consent

Don't forget that this is your treatment decision. When you meet with the psychiatrist, ask questions so that you are clear about how the treatment works and how it will benefit you before you agree to the plan.



If you agree to ECT, you must sign a consent form that indicates that you understand the risks, benefits and side effects of ECT treatment. If you have other supports such as family, friends or community supports, speak to them about your options.

The Treatment Procedure will be Explained

A course of ECT consists of individual treatments which are most often given two to three times per week. The total number of treatments and their frequency for each patient are determined by your doctor. The total number of treatments varies usually between 8 and 15, but it could be more or less.

Each treatment is given while you are asleep under general anaesthesia. The anaesthetic drug is injected by an anaesthetist through a needle inserted in a vein. You will be given oxygen through a facemask. Your level of oxygen, pulse, blood pressure, and temperature are monitored during the treatment. You will be asleep for about 10 minutes.

Each treatment procedure involves passing a small, controlled electric current between two metal discs (electrodes) which are applied on the surface of the scalp and/or temple. A small electric current passes between the two electrodes and through part of the brain in order to stimulate the brain. This electrical current causes a controlled therapeutic seizure which usually lasts 20 to 90 seconds.

What Happens after the ECT Treatment?

After the ECT treatment is complete, you will be moved from the treatment room to the recovery room where you will be monitored closely by a nurse. You will wake up within 10 to 20 minutes. A nurse checks your blood pressure, breathing, pulse, temperature and oxygen level regularly as you wake up. The nurses will check your level of consciousness by asking you questions such as your name, place and who is escorting you home. Deep breathing, coughing and moving help you recover from the anesthetic faster.



If you are an outpatient...

- ✚ You will attend a consultation with a Brain Stimulation clinic psychiatrist after your psychiatrist or physician has referred you to the ECT Clinic.
- ✚ You will meet with an Anesthesiologist who will do a brief physical examination.
- ✚ You will require further tests to prepare you for treatment; for example, ECG, blood work, and x-rays.
- ✚ You will meet with a nurse who will tell you how to prepare for ECT.
- ✚ You cannot have anything to eat or drink after midnight on the night before your treatment
- ✚ Don't have candy, gum, throat lozenges, or smoke prior to the treatment.
- ✚ You can brush your teeth.
- ✚ You can take blood pressure medications as advised with a small sip of water.
- ✚ If you have diabetes and are taking insulin, take your blood glucose level on the morning of each treatment and bring your insulin with you.
- ✚ You must leave the ECT clinic after treatment with a responsible adult. If this is not available, your treatment will be cancelled for that morning.

If you are an inpatient...

- ✚ You will attend a consultation with a Brain Stimulation clinic psychiatrist and an anesthesiologist who will do a brief physical examination.
- ✚ You may require further tests to prepare you for treatment; for example, ECG, blood work, and x-rays.
- ✚ You will meet with a nurse who will tell you how to prepare for ECT.
- ✚ You cannot have anything to eat or drink after midnight on the night before your treatment.
- ✚ Don't have candy, gum, throat lozenges, or smoke prior to the treatment.
- ✚ You can brush your teeth.
- ✚ You may be able to take some medications as advised and given to you by your nurse with a small sip of water.

and morning before treatment for everyone...

- ✚ Do not use any special hair products such as gel or hairspray after you wash it. ECT treatment works better with clean, dry hair.
- ✚ Remove all make-up, lipstick, artificial nails, and nail polish from fingers and toes.
- ✚ Remove all jewelry such as earrings, rings, watches and body pierces and leave at home.
- ✚ Leave all valuables at home or in the nursing station.
- ✚ You may wear a hospital gown or loose clothing to the treatment.

After your ECT treatment and recovery, your nurse takes the IV out and puts a small bandage on the site. You can take this off later in the day. Before you leave the recovery room you will be assessed by nurse who will ensure that you are fully oriented and you are steady on your feet.

If you are an **inpatient**, a nurse will return you to your room in a wheelchair. When you return to the unit, your nurse will support your post-ECT needs as well as take your blood pressure, pulse, and respirations. Once you are fully recovered from your treatment and anaesthetic, you will be encouraged to get up, get dressed and have breakfast. It is advisable that on the day of the treatment that you stay on the unit, but if accompanied by a responsible adult you can have short periods of time outside.



If you are an **outpatient**, you will go to the ECT recovery waiting area before going home with a responsible adult. If you are coming from home, plan to be at the hospital 3 to 4 hours.

Common effects after ECT ...

There are 5 common effects after ECT treatment. These are:

- + headache
- + sore muscles or stiffness
- + confusion
- + memory loss
- + nausea

If you have any of these problems while you are in the hospital, please inform the ECT health care team.

Headache

You may get a headache. This may be caused by the anaesthetic, the ECT treatment or not having anything to eat or drink for a long time.

Some ways to help are:

- + have something to eat and drink
- + take pain medication
- + rest or sleep in a dark room
- + put a cold cloth on your forehead
- + take some deep breaths and try to relax
- + try relaxation tapes, music, yoga or meditation



If you have a headache that is not helped by any of these methods, contact your family doctor.

Muscle Stiffness

You may get some muscle stiffness that is caused by the medication that is given to you during the treatment to relax your muscles. Some ways to help are:

- ✚ Take a warm bath
- ✚ Request medication for pain
- ✚ Do some moderate exercise such as walking or gentle stretching.
- ✚ try relaxation tapes, music, yoga or meditation



If your muscle stiffness is not helped by any of these methods, contact your family doctor.

Confusion

You may feel confused after an anesthetic and ECT treatment. It is best to rest the day of your treatment. This confusion caused by anesthetic and ECT does not last long.

Memory Loss

You may have some problems with loss of memory. This can last a few days to a few months. Avoid making major decisions while you are having ECT treatments.

Some ways to help:

- ✚ Keep a diary and record things you want to remember.
- ✚ Use a calendar to record appointments and important events.
- ✚ Ask your friends and family members to help you.

Nausea



Nausea may be caused by the anesthetic or not eating and drinking for a long time.

Some ways to help are:

- ✚ have something to eat and drink such as dry toast, crackers, apple juice
- ✚ try to rest or sleep
- ✚ take medication to prevent or control nausea
- ✚ Inform ECT staff so an anti-nausea medication can be added for your next treatment



For your safety and the safety of others after an anesthetic:

-  Do not drive, or operate power equipment or machinery for 24 hours.
-  Do not drink alcohol such as wine, beer or liquor for 24 hours.

What is my follow-up after all of my ECT treatments are done?

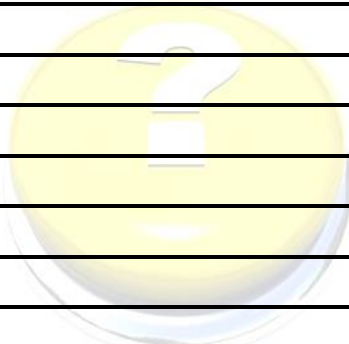
You will talk to your psychiatrist and members of the health care team about how to stay healthy.

You may need to have ongoing maintenance ECT, take medication, join a therapy group or have one-to-one talk therapy. Together with your psychiatrist and your support people, you will make a treatment and follow-up care plan.

Questions and concerns . . .

All members of the health care team are here to help you. Please let them know if you have questions or want to talk.

My questions are...



Monitoring My Progress...

	Week #1	Week #2	Week #3
Very Much Improved			
Much Improved			
Minimally Improved			
No Change			
Worse			



My appointments:

camh Temerty Centre for
Therapeutic Brain Intervention

1001 Queen Street West
Unit 4-1, Room 169
Toronto, ON M6J 1H4
Tel: (416) 535-8501, ext. 32130 / Fax: (416) 583-1358