

*If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your nurse or psychiatrist.*

## Electroconvulsive Therapy

Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) uses a small amount of electrical current to alter the brain's chemical responses. It is used for patients who do not respond to (or cannot tolerate) treatments, such as therapy sessions or medications for disorders, such as:

- Depression
- Mania
- Psychosis
- Catatonia
- Certain neurological illnesses

ECT has proven to be a safe and effective treatment option and can bring about an improvement in:

- Activity level
- Mood
- Sleep patterns
- Appetite

During ECT treatment, you will not be awake or aware of your surroundings. An anesthesiologist, as well as the psychiatrist, will monitor you during the procedure, give you medications and provide oxygen.

ECT often includes a series of 6 to 12 treatments on average. These are usually done 2 or 3 times a week. Treatments may be given during a hospital stay or on an outpatient basis.

The number of treatments depends on your symptoms. Often it takes several treatments before ECT benefits are noted. This treatment still needs to be combined with your prescribed medicines and routine therapy sessions.

### Before your ECT treatment

#### **Getting ready**

Days before ECT treatment, you will meet with your psychiatrist and an anesthesiologist. They will explain ECT, its benefits and side effects. You will be given a consent form to sign.

Certain tests may be needed, such as:

- EKG
- Blood and urine samples
- Chest X-ray

Outpatients need to check with their psychiatrist for guidelines for taking needed medicines on the morning of their ECT treatments.

### ***Night before***

**Do not have anything to eat or drink after midnight the night before ECT treatment. This includes no gum (or Nicorette® gum) or hard candy.**

## **Day of the treatment**

### ***For inpatients***

On the morning of ECT treatment, nursing staff will prepare you for the procedure. All jewelry, partial or full dentures, hearing aids, contact lenses, glasses and make-up must be removed. You will wear a hospital gown. Before you leave the unit, you will need to empty your bladder. Then a unit staff person or a hospital transporter will take you on a stretcher to the ECT treatment area.

### ***For outpatients***

Do not have anything to eat or drink. As directed by your psychiatrist, take any heart or blood pressure medicines (or other medicines) with small sips of water. It is helpful to wear loose comfortable clothing and remove any jewelry and nail polish. Be sure to:

- Have a responsible adult come with you to the hospital. You may not go home alone after ECT treatment.
- Bring your mouth guard and ambu bag to the hospital.

Please plan to arrive by 6 am if your procedure is on a Monday through Thursday and by 7 am if your procedure is on a Friday. Come to the Registration Desk, 5th floor, Feinberg Pavilion, 251 East Huron Street. Parking is available for patients and visitors in the garage at 222 East Huron Street, across from the Feinberg and Galter pavilions. For discounted rates, please bring your parking ticket with you. Tickets can be validated at the Customer Service Desks on the 1st and 2nd floor of the Feinberg and Galter pavilions or the 1st floor of Prentice (including the Prentice 24-hour desk near the Superior Street entrance).

When you first arrive, your registration is checked. If there are any delays, you may be asked to wait in the reception area. Staff will keep you updated during this time.

The nurse will take you to the procedure area where you can change into a hospital gown. At this time dentures, hearing aids, contact lenses and make-up must be removed.

## **ECT procedure**

After you arrive in the ECT area, an IV (into the vein) line will be placed in your hand. It will be used for giving medicines and needed fluid. You will be attached to monitors to check your heart beat during the treatment. A cuff will be placed on your arm to check your blood pressure.

A specially trained team of physicians and nurses will be present during the entire test.

- A psychiatrist will perform the ECT treatment.
- The anesthesiologist will monitor you during the treatment, give medicines and assist your breathing as needed.
- Nursing staff will assist and monitor your progress after the ECT treatment.

Small pads will be placed on your head and upper body to check your brain waves. Medicine to make you sleep will be injected into the IV. Your mouth guard will be put in place. Once you are asleep, an electric current will pass from the ECT machine to your brain. This will cause a seizure (with limited muscle movement) that lasts about 30 to 60 seconds. IV medicine will be used to control your body's response to ECT. You will have no pain or feeling during the treatment and you will not be awake for it.

## After ECT

After the treatment, you will feel sleepy and slightly confused about your surroundings for 45 minutes to an hour. The nursing staff will check on you often, and monitor your blood pressure and heart rate. As soon as you are alert and breathing well:

- **Inpatients** will return to their room on a stretcher. You may resume your regular diet. Many patients often take a nap when they return to their room. The nurse will continue to check on you.
- **Outpatients** will go to the Same Day Surgery area where you can change your clothes and have a snack. Your IV will be removed and you can go home when you are ready to leave. Each patient must go home with a responsible adult. You may resume your regular diet. **For the next 24 hours, do not:**
  - **Make any important decisions.**
  - **Drive a car or any other vehicle or operate dangerous equipment.**

You will not remember the actual ECT treatment.

### ***Common side effects:***

- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Nausea
- Slight sore throat (if a breathing tube was in place during ECT treatment)

Medicine can be given to relieve these effects. Tell your nurse or psychiatrist if any of these effects are noted.

In some cases, patients may have either:

- Short-term memory loss during the period of time of the ECT treatments (for example, forgetting what you had for dinner, not remembering talking to someone earlier in the day). Your ability to remember will often return within a few weeks to a few months after the treatments are finished.

- Some patients describe “spotty” memory loss for events that occurred as far back as 6 months before starting ECT treatments. This memory loss can persist.

Be sure to tell your psychiatrist and the nurse about any memory loss.

### **Follow-up care**

To obtain the best outcome to improve your quality of life, your psychiatrist may suggest weekly or monthly outpatient ECT treatments along with medicines and regular therapy sessions.