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Overview

Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), also known as electroshock therapy, is a safe and effective medical procedure that gives your brain electrical stimulation to help with depression, manic-depressive illness and schizophrenia.

ECT is between 60 and 90 percent effective in major depression, and adults of nearly all ages can receive treatment.

What to Expect from Electroconvulsive Therapy

The first step in getting ECT is to get a referral from your psychiatrist. The referral cannot come from a primary care physician, psychologist or nurse.

ECT is usually considered if your psychiatrist has tried several antidepressant medication trials and you still have significant depression symptoms. If you are severely depressed, actively suicidal or not eating and drinking, ECT may be considered earlier as the first line of treatment.

We receive the largest number of referrals for ECT treatment in central Indiana and give you access to the latest ECT technology. IU Health has more than

doubled its number of treatments at its IU Health Methodist location since 2011, offering more than 1,800 treatments in 2016.

ECT Sessions

Your ECT treatment will most likely be an outpatient procedure in a comfortable, non-surgical setting. You won't even need to change into a gown. Since your ECT will be in the morning on an empty stomach, you will be given a light breakfast after your session. A team of psychiatrists, anesthesiologists and nurses conduct the treatment.

You will be asleep for your ECT session and electrodes will be placed on your head. You will not feel any discomfort when the electrical stimulation is given. You will wake up in the recovery area 5 to 10 minutes after the procedure.

ECT duration

ECT is given in a series of treatments, usually three times per week. Don't be alarmed if you don't see results right away, because it can take between six and 12 treatments before there are benefits. Your treatment will be complete when there is a sustained response.

You may need a longer course of ECT if you have relapsed previously after completing ECT or have had an extremely severe depressive episode. Maintenance ECT is typically given weekly for four treatments, then every other week for two months, then monthly for two treatments. This helps reduce the return of depressive symptoms.

Preparing For...

To minimize risks from ECT, you will receive a thorough medical clearance (work up) before beginning treatment. Please review side effects of ECT with your psychiatrist before treatment.

Check with your insurance provider to make sure the location of your ECT treatment is in-network before scheduling the work up testing.

After Your Procedure

After the series of treatments are complete and you have recovered, it's important to keep your follow-up therapy and psychiatrist appointments. This can also

include continuing prescribed medication and possibly maintenance ECT.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor About ECT

- What should I expect with ECT treatment?
- How many treatments will I need?
- What side effects are there from ECT?
- Who can refer me for ECT treatment?
- Can I eat or drink before treatment on treatment days?
- What medications can I take before treatment on treatment days?
- Can I drive on treatment days?

Referral

A referral for ECT must come from your psychiatrist. To refer you for this treatment, your psychiatrist should call [317.962.8940](tel:317.962.8940). The referring psychiatrist will need to complete the [ECT outpatient work-up form](#). This includes a full psychiatric evaluation, complete history and physical, insurance information and several medical tests.

Resources

What is ECT?

The American Psychiatric Association explains ECT treatment.

National Institutes of Mental Health

This site explains brain stimulation therapies.

Patient Stories for Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT)

For General Information
800.248.1199

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