

Center for Psychiatric Medicine
1713 6th Avenue South
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ECT INFORMATION SHEET

Your physician has recommended that you receive treatment with Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT). Your physician prior to your signing an Informed Consent will review the nature of this treatment, including the risks and benefits that you may experience. In addition, the physician performing the treatment will provide an opportunity for questions. The following information was prepared to give you general information about ECT.

You will receive ECT to treat your psychiatric condition. Whether ECT or an alternative treatment (medications or psychotherapy) is most appropriate for you depends on your prior experience with these treatments, the nature of your psychiatric condition, and other factors. Your physician will tell you why ECT has been recommended in your particular case.

ECT involves a series of treatments. Treatments are performed in the morning and because general anesthesia is involved, you should have nothing to eat or drink after midnight the night before your treatment. An IV will be placed so that the anesthesia drugs can be given, and will be removed prior to your going home. Because you are asleep, you will neither experience pain nor discomfort during the procedure, nor feel the electric current. After waking up from the anesthesia, you will be observed in a recovery area until fully alert.

To prepare for the treatments, monitors will be placed on your chest and toe to measure heart rate, blood pressure and the oxygen content of your blood. After you are asleep, a carefully controlled amount of electricity will be passed between two electrodes that have been placed on your forehead. When the current is passed, a generalized seizure (approximately 30 seconds in duration) is produced in the brain, but because you have been given a medication to relax your muscle, contractions in your body that would accompany a seizure are considerably softened.

The number of treatments that you receive will depend on your psychiatric condition, how quickly you respond to the treatments, and the medical judgment of your psychiatrist. Typically, six to twelve treatments are given. This number will vary based on your individual response.

The potential benefit of ECT is that it may lead to an improvement of your psychiatric condition. As with all forms of medical treatment, some patients recover quickly; others recover only to relapse again and require further treatment; others fail to respond at all.

Like other medical procedures, ECT involves some risks. When you awaken, you may experience some short-term confusion that should resolve. You may have a headache, muscle soreness or nausea; these

side effects usually respond to simple treatment. More serious medical complications, dislocations, fractures or dental problems rarely occur. While also rare, the most common medical complications are irregularities in heart rate and rhythm. Very rarely, heart attack or stroke can occur. As with any anesthetic procedure, there is a remote possibility of death.

To reduce the risk of medical complications, your physician will complete a medical evaluation proper to ECT. However, in spite of all precautions there is a small chance you will experience a medical complication. Should this occur, medical care and treatment will be instituted. You will be responsible for the cost of such treatment whether personally or through medical insurance. No compensation will be paid for lost wages or other consequential damages.

A common side effect of ECT is reduced memory functioning. The memory difficulties with ECT have a characteristic pattern, with problems more pronounced shortly following treatments. After the treatment course is completed, memory function improves, although you may experience difficulties remembering events that happened before and immediately after ECT. This spottiness in memory for past events may extend back to several months following ECT course however; you may be left with permanent gaps in memory, particularly for events that occur close in time to the ECT course. In addition, for a short period following ECT, you may experience difficulty in learning and remembering new information. This difficulty in forming new memories should be temporary and will most likely subside within several weeks following the ECT course.

Because of the possible problems with confusion and memory, it is best that you not make any important personal or business decisions during or immediately following the ECT course. After the treatment course, you will begin a "convalescence period", which will vary from patient to patient. During this period, you should refrain from driving, transacting business, or engaging in other activities for which impairment of memory may be problematic until advised by your doctor. Alcoholic beverages as well as illicit substances are also prohibited during the period.

Please understand that you should feel free to ask questions at any time during and after the ECT course. Your decision to agree to ECT is being made on a voluntary basis and you may withdraw your consent and the treatments will be stopped at any time.

Patient/Responsible Party Signature: _____

Date:

This information is available for the sight impaired.