



CENTER FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

## Understanding Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT)

### What is ECT?

Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is a procedure in which electric current is carefully applied to the brain to trigger a seizure. It is typically used to treat patients who are suffering from a number of psychiatric conditions, especially severe depression and catatonic (rigid, unmovable) states. It works by relieving symptoms that are not responsive to other treatments.

### How does ECT work?

ECT is performed by passing a small amount of electricity through electrodes attached to your scalp and into your brain, producing a seizure that usually lasts less than 60 seconds. Modern ECT is done under general anesthesia, so patients do not experience pain and have no memory of the procedure itself. Cardiac and respiratory response is closely monitored and it is rarely necessary to have a breathing tube. Recovery from anesthesia is rapid — typically only a few minutes.

Common side effects from ECT include headache, muscle soreness, upset stomach and/or temporary, short-term memory difficulties. In most cases, these are nonexistent or mild and improve shortly after treatment is completed.

ECT treatments are generally given two to three times weekly for three to four weeks — for a total of eight to 12 treatments. The number of treatments depends on the severity of symptoms and how rapidly they improve. In certain cases, additional (though less frequent) treatments may be given on an extended basis.

### Is it time to consider ECT?

ECT is a safe, effective and FDA-approved treatment. Although it is most commonly used to treat the often painful and debilitating consequences of severe or treatment-resistant depression, it is also used to treat certain neurologic, psychotic and manic symptoms.

ECT is one of the fastest ways to relieve symptoms in severely depressed or suicidal patients, in patients who suffer from mania,

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and in other mental illnesses. It is generally used as a treatment option in the following circumstances:

- Severe depression is unresponsive to other forms of therapy
- When a patient doesn't tolerate the side effects of psychiatric medications
- In older patients who are taking multiple medications for other illnesses and who are not able to take additional medications for depression
- When a patient is so ill that his or her life is in danger
- Those who have been successfully treated with ECT in the past
- In patients who pose a severe threat to themselves or others, and it is dangerous to wait until medications take effect

### What Can I Expect?

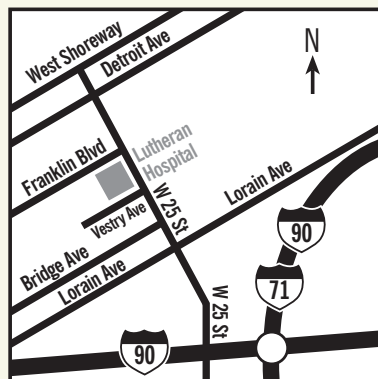
ECT can be given on an inpatient or outpatient basis. Typically, routine presurgical testing (including lab work and a physical exam) will be ordered to ensure that ECT is safe for you. In some cases, evaluation with a specialist such as a cardiologist, dentist, neurologist or endocrinologist may be required. Imaging is sometimes ordered. Your ECT provider may recommend that certain medications be adjusted or stopped prior to treatment. The procedure takes about five to 10 minutes, with added time for preparation and recovery. It is often necessary to take time off work for several weeks during the course of treatment, but rapid return to work is the norm.

Ready to make an [appointment](#)?

Specialists from Cleveland Clinic's Center for Behavioral Health perform ECT at Lutheran Hospital and at Marymount Hospital, Cleveland Clinic hospitals.



**LUTHERAN HOSPITAL** is a 204 bed acute-care facility located in a vibrant and rejuvenated Ohio City. Parking is available in the surface lot at Lutheran Hospital. Lutheran Hospital offers free and secure parking to all patients and visitors. Patients and visitors are encouraged to park in the lots located in front of and next to the hospital on Vestry Street off West 25th Street. Handicapped parking is available directly in front of the hospital, off Vestry Street.



To make an appointment or refer a patient for ECT at **Lutheran Hospital**, call **216.363.2297**.

**Lutheran Hospital**  
1730 West 25th St.  
Cleveland, OH 44113



**MARYMOUNT HOSPITAL** was founded in 1949 by the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis. Today, Marymount Hospital is a 322-bed acute care hospital, serving communities in southern and southeastern Cuyahoga County. Free surface parking is located throughout the campus. Handicap spaces are located near the hospital walkways.



To make an appointment or refer a patient for ECT at **Marymount Hospital**, call **216.587.8335**.

**Marymount Hospital**  
12300 McCracken Road  
Garfield Heights, OH 44125