

ELECTROCONVULSIVE THERAPY

Information and FAQs



WHAT IS ELECTROCONVULSIVE THERAPY (ECT)?

Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is a procedure, done under general anaesthesia, in which small electric currents are passed through the brain, intentionally triggering a brief seizure. It is conducted in a safe and controlled environment. ECT has been shown to quickly reverse the symptoms of certain mental illnesses, such as treatment-resistant depression.

IS IT SAFE?

ECT is among the most effective treatments available for depression. It is thought to improve depression in 70% to 90% of patients, with a response rate much higher than that of antidepressant drugs. It is one of the fastest ways to relieve symptoms in severely depressed or suicidal patients. It's also very effective for patients who suffer from mania or a number of other mental illnesses.

ECT is generally used when severe depression is unresponsive to other forms of therapy. Or it might be used when patients pose a severe threat to themselves or others and it is too dangerous to wait until medications take effect.

Although ECT has been used since the 1940s and 1950s, it remains misunderstood by the general public. Many of the procedure's risks and side effects are not related to the treatment itself. ECT, when applied in a controlled environment by highly trained, professional medical staff is safe to use and can be highly effective in the treatment of certain mental illnesses.

GETTING ECT VIA NIGHTINGALE HOSPITAL

Nightingale Hospital has a formal agreement with the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL), for the delivery of ECT. This agreement provides Nightingale Hospital patients with access to treatment at Northwick Park Hospital, Harrow.

The cost of ECT treatment at Nightingale Hospital includes an escort nurse and private transfer to and from Northwick Park Hospital, if needed.

All patients receiving ECT must be under the care of a Nightingale consultant psychiatrist. This treatment is available to both outpatients and inpatients.

HOW MUCH DOES THE TREATMENT COST?

Please refer to our *Outpatient Fees Price List* for the current price of ECT treatment. This cost will **include the anaesthetist fee**, however, prices do not include consultant psychiatrist fees, which will be charged directly to the patient by the treating psychiatrist.

Nightingale's Patient Services Team will administer the costs of your treatment. You will be asked to provide your insurance coverage or credit card details. If you are paying yourself, you may be asked to pay a deposit. You will receive receipts for all treatments incurred.

Please contact Nightingale Hospital's Patient Services Team, using the details provided, to assist you with this.

WHAT TO EXPECT

There are eight key steps involved in administering electroconvulsive therapy (ECT).

Step one: Your consultant psychiatrist or general practitioner refers you to Nightingale Hospital for ECT

If your consultant psychiatrist or GP considers you a potential candidate for ECT, you will need to be referred to a consultant psychiatrist here at Nightingale Hospital, stating your psychiatric and medical condition, as well as a list of the medication that you are currently on.

Step two: A preliminary interview with a consultant psychiatrist at Nightingale Hospital

Once a Nightingale consultant psychiatrist has received your referral letter, you will be contacted and invited to attend a preliminary interview. If our consultant psychiatrist also considers you to benefit from ECT, then they will prescribe it for you and you will be required to fill in a consent form, a treatment record and a MADRS form.

It is standard practice to be prescribed between 6 and 12 treatments to start with. After every two treatments, our consultant psychiatrist will review you and complete an ECT review form.

Step three: Pre-ECT assessment

Following your interview with a Nightingale Hospital consultant psychiatrist, a pre-ECT assessment will be carried out by one of Nightingale Hospital's on-call doctors, along with the ECT Coordinator. **The assessment fee for outpatients is £200 and payment must be made before confirming the assessment. No assessment fee will apply for inpatients.**

The assessment will cover the following:

- Electrocardiogram (ECG)
- Blood test, depending on your current medication
- Body Mass Index (BMI)

Step four: Assessment by ECT coordinator and lead nurse

Once the pre-ECT assessment has been completed, you will be assessed by the ECT coordinator who will explain to you how the procedure will be carried out and discuss the benefits of the treatment. You will be able to ask any questions you have about the treatment during this stage, as well as discuss any queries or concerns you have.

Step five: Preparation for the treatment

Please refrain from eating or drinking after midnight. If you take antihypertensive medication, ensure it is taken by 6:30AM. Wear comfortable clothing and minimal jewelry, and avoid using nail varnish. Additionally, follow any specific instructions provided by your consultant or ECT lead, as their recommendations may vary.

Step six: Travelling to the ECT clinic for treatment

As an outpatient, you will need a carer or companion post-treatment. Travel arrangements and other logistics will be coordinated with you beforehand by the ECT coordinator.

If you do not live local to London, we would ask you to consider booking suitable accommodation in central London the night before treatment. This will allow you to avoid any travel delays if you are coming to the hospital from outside of London.

The ECT Coordinator will complete the pre-ECT checklist after having checked your vital signs and asking you a few orientation questions.

Treatment will be administered on **Tuesdays and Fridays at Northwick Park Hospital in Harrow.**

Step seven: Undergoing the ECT

When you arrive at the ECT clinic, an anaesthetist will assess you before your first treatment.

The ECT lead nurse will then ask you to sign the ECT consent form to confirm that you wish to go ahead with the treatment. Please note that you have the right to change your mind and not go ahead with the treatment at any time.

A general anaesthetic will be given to you by the anaesthetist with the assistance of the anaesthetic nurse. The ECT will be carried out by a psychiatrist from the ECT clinic with the assistance of the ECT lead nurse.

The treatment will be either unilateral or bilateral (which refers to the placement of electrodes on your head), according to your ECT prescription. This will result in a controlled, but safe, seizure lasting approximately 12 seconds. The entire treatment will last approximately 5 minutes.

Step eight: After the treatment

You may feel slightly disorientated, confused, or forgetful. During this time, you will be taken into a recovery room where your vital signs and orientations will be checked by a recovery nurse.

You may experience a slight headache as well as some aches and pains. This is completely normal and will only last for a few minutes.

Once you are alert, you will be escorted into the lounge where you can relax with refreshments plus your morning medication, if any.

You will then be escorted back to Nightingale Hospital by the ECT Coordinator. Upon arriving back at the hospital, you will be asked to sign an outpatient discharge form if you are an outpatient. You will then be permitted to leave with your companion or carer.

You are strongly advised not to drive or undertake any other activity which could risk your health for the next 24 hours.

For any ECT questions or enquiries please contact the ECT Coordinator at Nightingale Hospital on ect@nightingalehospital.co.uk.