

This pamphlet is one of eight. The titles are as follows:

- *Carers*
- *Community Treatment Orders*
- *Electroconvulsive Therapy*
- *Involuntary Detained Patients*
- *People referred for a Psychiatric Examination Under the Mental Health Act 1996*
- *Treatments*
- *Voluntary Patients*
- *Your rights under the Mental Health Act 1996*

Other pamphlets available include:

- *The Mental Health Review Board, Information about the review process*
- *The Council of Official Visitors*
- *The Mental Health Law Centre*

Contact Directory:

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(Mental Health Carers and Friends Association)
Phone 9228 0577 Fax 9228 0440
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Council of Official Visitors

Phone 9226 3266 Fax 9226 3977
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Mental Health Law Centre

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Mental Health Review Board

Phone 9219 3162 Fax 9219 3163

Multicultural Access Unit (DoH)

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Phone 9400 9504 Fax 9400 9554

Office of Health Review

Phone 9426 0100 Fax 9322 6848
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Office of the Chief Psychiatrist

Phone 9222 4462, 9222 4079, 9222 4217
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Psychiatric Emergency Team

Phone 9224 8888 (24 hours) Rural 1800 676 822

WA Association for Mental Health

Phone 9420 7277 Fax 9420 7280

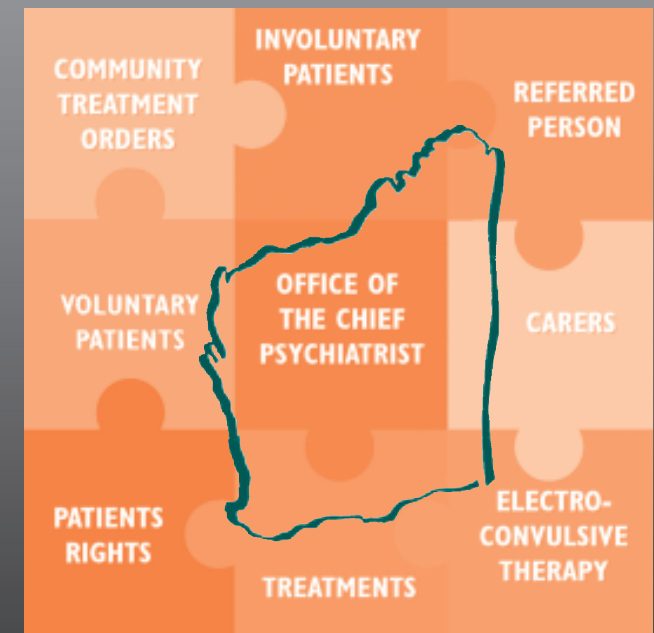
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OFFICE OF THE CHIEF PSYCHIATRIST

ELECTROCONVULSIVE THERAPY

*Information about
Electroconvulsive Therapy
and your rights under the
Mental Health Act 1996*

This pamphlet helps answer questions you might have about Electroconvulsive Therapy.



Department of Health
Government of Western Australia

Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT), what is it?

ECT is a treatment for a number of mental illnesses but mainly severe depression. It is given by sending a small electric current through the brain. If your medication has not improved your condition, or if your illness is very severe, or if the treatment has worked in the past, your psychiatrist may recommend the treatment for you. ECT could help you but this may only happen after a number of treatments over a few weeks.

Is ECT safe?

ECT has been used for many years and is considered by doctors to be very safe. There is no medical evidence that the brain is damaged.

Will it hurt?

ECT is always given under a general anaesthetic. Before any treatment your doctor will examine you to make sure you are fit to have an anaesthetic. As you are unconscious during the treatment you will feel no pain.

What are the side effects?

When you wake up you may feel a bit confused and some people get a headache. The confusion will wear off and you can be given medication for the headache.

Some people complain about having a poor memory for a while after the treatment, but this does not usually last.

Can a voluntary patient be forced to have ECT?

If you are a voluntary patient ECT cannot be given to you without your consent. If, because of your illness you are unable to give consent, or if you refuse to give consent, your psychiatrist may decide that you should become an involuntary patient.

Can an involuntary patient be forced to have ECT?

Even as an involuntary patient your psychiatrist must discuss the treatment of ECT with you and ask you if you consent to the treatment. If you consent, another psychiatrist must also see you to make sure that ECT is necessary and that you understand what you are giving your consent to.

If you do not give consent, a second psychiatrist must see you to provide another opinion about whether the ECT should be given. If that psychiatrist agrees that ECT should be given then you could be treated without your consent.

If the second psychiatrist does not agree that ECT should be given, then the treatment will not be allowed. The first psychiatrist may then refer your case to the Mental Health Review Board. The Board cannot insist that ECT takes place but they may suggest other treatments or the transfer of your care to another psychiatrist, or order that you are no longer an involuntary patient.

The only time the steps above are not followed is when you require ECT in an emergency situation.

How will I be told about ECT?

Your doctor will talk about the treatment with you. If you want more information ask your doctor to suggest some reading and other sources of information. Once you are fully informed the doctor will ask for your consent.

You can have someone like a friend, relative or Official Visitor present when the doctor is talking to you about the treatment.

If you have questions later, staff on the ward can talk with you.

How will I be prepared for ECT?

As you will be given an anaesthetic, you must not have anything by mouth for several hours before the treatment. ECT is usually given in the morning and you will be asked not to eat anything from midnight.

You should go to the toilet shortly before the treatment and it is important to wear loose-fitting, comfortable clothing.

Remove jewellery, except for wedding rings, and lock it away for safekeeping.

If you wear dentures, the nurse will ask for them just before the treatment and return them to you when you wake up.

What happens during treatment?

Two doctors and two nurses will be with you all the time during the treatment. The treatment will be given to you while you are under anaesthetic. When you wake and have recovered from the anaesthetic, you can have something to eat.

What are my rights, and who can help?

If you are an involuntary patient and unhappy about any aspect of your treatment, you have the right to:

- Ask for a second opinion from another psychiatrist about your treatment.
- Ask for a review of your case by the Mental Health Review Board.
- Ask to be visited by an Official Visitor.