



Patient Information Leaflet

# Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT)

**Produced by:**  
ECT Suite, Sevenacres

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**If you are unable to read this leaflet because English is not your first language, please ask someone who speaks English to telephone PALS on 01983 534850 for further information and help.**

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**Polish:**

Jeśli nie jesteś w stanie przeczytać tej ulotki bo angielski nie jest pierwszym językiem, poproś kogoś, kto mówi po angielsku, o kontakt telefoniczny z (PALS 01983 534850) aby uzyskać więcej informacji i pomoc

**Russian:**

Если вы не можете прочитать этот буклет на английском языке потому что не является первым языке, пожалуйста, попросите кого-нибудь, кто говорит на английском языке для телефонного (PALS 01983 534850) для получения дополнительной информации и помощи

**Turkish:**

Eğer İngilizce ana diliniz değilse, çünkü bu broşürü okumak için yapamıyorsanız, daha fazla bilgi için 01983 534850 üzerinde PALS telefon İngilizce bilen birine sormak ve yardım lütfen

**Bulgarian:**

Ако не сте в състояние да прочетете тази листовка, тъй като английският не е първи език, попитайте някой, който говори английски, за да телефонирам (PALS на 01983 534850) за повече информация и помощ

**Czech:**

Pokud nejste schopni přečíst tuto příbalovou informaci, protože angličtina není vaším rodným jazykem, zeptejte se někoho, kdo mluví anglicky na telefonní PALS na 01983 534850 pro další informace a pomoc

**Bengali:**

আপনি ইংরেজি আপনার প্রথম ভাষা না থাকার কারণে এই লফিলটে পড়তে অক্ষম হন, তাহলে আরও তথ্যের জন্য 01983 534850 নভেগিশেন PALS টেলিফোনে ইংরেজি কথা কতে জিজ্ঞাসা করুন এবং সাহায্য করুন

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## **Welcome from the ECT team at Sevenacres**

This leaflet should help provide you with the facts you need to make an informed decision about whether to have a course of ECT. Alternatively, if you are so unwell that you are unable to make a decision about having the treatment, you may find the information in this leaflet useful.

Your relatives or carers may also find this leaflet helpful. It may help to ease any concerns you, your relatives or carers have about ECT.

If after reading this leaflet you, your relatives or carers have any questions, please contact a member of the ECT team. Our contact details are on page 12 of this leaflet.

## **What is ECT?**

ECT is a safe and effective medical treatment in which a small electrical current is passed across the brain and causes a modified, controlled seizure. This can help you recover from your illness.

Symptoms such as unusual thoughts, sleepless nights, loss of appetite and changes in your energy levels or mood can all benefit from ECT.

## When is ECT given?

ECT can be used to treat the following types of illness:

- depressive episode (commonly called “depression”).
- manic episode (a phase of illness causing elated mood and overactivity).
- catatonia (a very rare illness).

Some people might experience a depressive episode or a manic episode as part of bipolar affective disorder.

ECT is usually given in one of the following circumstances:

- your condition is life-threatening and a rapid improvement is needed to save your life.
- your condition is either causing you immense suffering or is likely to get worse, so that a rapid improvement is needed.
- your illness has not responded to other treatments, such as medication.
- you have responded well to ECT in past episodes of your illness.

## What happens during ECT treatment?

Treatment is usually given in the ECT Suite at Sevenacres. Once in the treatment room, you will first be asked to lie down on a couch. Once you are comfortable, the following things will happen:

- the anaesthetist will insert a tiny tube into a vein in your hand or arm.
- some sticky pads to monitor brain activity will be placed on your forehead and behind your ears.
- some sticky pads to monitor your heartbeat will be placed on your chest.
- a blood pressure cuff will be put on your arm.
- a small oxygen monitor will be clipped onto one of your fingers.

You will then be given a short-acting general anaesthetic drug through the tube in your arm. This will send you to sleep for about ten minutes. Another drug will be given to relax your muscles during the treatment.

After this, two pads are applied on either side of the head and a small amount of electrical current is sent across the brain for a few seconds. This causes your body to undergo a mild seizure, which will cause it to twitch rhythmically for a few seconds.

The anaesthetic prevents you from feeling anything, while the muscle relaxant prevents your body from moving too much.

After the ECT treatment, you will be allowed to sleep for as long as you need, since the treatment and anaesthetic may cause you to feel drowsy. You may be in the department for up to two hours.

## **Preparation for ECT**

Your doctor will discuss with you the reasons it is felt ECT could benefit you. You will be able to ask any questions that might help you decide whether to have ECT.

Your relatives or carers will also have a chance to ask any questions they might have.

You will then have a medical assessment. This will include any necessary investigations (such as a heart trace or blood tests) and a general physical examination if this has not already been carried out.

## **Do I have to give consent?**

Just over half of all patients given ECT are judged to be capable of making a decision about treatment themselves. The rest, whose mental illness causes them to be incapable of making a decision about treatment, are usually given ECT under the Mental Health Act 1983.

If you are mentally capable of making a decision about treatment, you will need to give your consent before being given ECT. This consent will be given by signing a consent form once you have made an informed decision to have ECT. Consent for ECT can be withdrawn at any time. You can tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want to have the treatment.

If it is decided that you are incapable of making a decision about ECT, the Mental Health Act 1983 allows hospital staff to give:

- one or two urgent ECT treatments, or
- more treatments if a completely independent doctor has assessed you and agrees to you having ECT.

Your nurse can refer you for an independent advocate.

## **Inpatients**

Treatment takes place in the mornings. As for any medical procedure under general anaesthetic, you must not have had anything to eat or drink since midnight. The nurse will check with you before each treatment to ask when you last had anything to eat or drink.

A member of the ward staff will accompany you to the ECT Suite on the morning of your treatment.

The staff in the ECT Suite will answer any additional questions you may have about the treatment.

Following your treatment, you will be given something to eat and drink before you return to the ward.

You will be back on your ward by lunchtime.

## **Outpatients**

As for any medical procedure under general anaesthetic, you must not have anything to eat or drink from midnight. The nurse will check with you before each treatment to ask when you last had anything to eat or drink.

You will be asked to attend the ECT Suite at 8.30am. You will need to bring with you any medication that you would normally take in the morning, so staff can give this to you following the treatment.

The staff in the ECT Suite will answer any further questions that you or your relative or carer may have about the treatment and will identify any additional needs you or your relative or carer may have.

Following your treatment, you will be given something to eat and drink before you leave the ECT Suite. You will be ready to leave at around lunchtime.



**An adult must accompany you home from the ECT Suite and stay with you at home for the rest of the day and overnight after your treatment. You must not operate machinery or sign any legal documents for 24 hours following treatment.**

If you are having a regular course of ECT, you must not drive for the duration of the course of treatment.

If you are having maintenance ECT, you must not drive for 48 hours following each treatment. You should check your insurance policy, as some companies may not cover drivers receiving ECT.

Your GP will be notified that you are having ECT.

## **Will ECT help me?**

ECT is a highly effective treatment. Nine out of ten patients see improvements in their illness with a course of ECT.

Naturally, your doctor cannot promise that ECT will help you. One patient in ten does not seem to benefit from the treatment.

## **Is ECT safe?**

ECT is an extremely safe procedure. In a recent study of 300,000 treatments, there were no deaths caused by ECT.

All general anaesthetics carry risk, but this risk is extremely small if you are physically fit.

The risk may be higher if you have heart disease or other illnesses, which is why you will have a thorough medical assessment prior to treatment. If there are any special concerns about the safety of giving you an anaesthetic, you may be fully assessed by an anaesthetist prior to your treatment. If the anaesthetist considers it unsafe to give you an anaesthetic, you will not be able to have ECT.

## **How often is ECT given?**

ECT is usually given twice a week. The ECT Suite operates on Tuesdays and Fridays.

## **How many treatments will I need?**

There may be a brief improvement in your symptoms after the first or second treatment. After the third treatment, the improvement tends to last longer.

Most patients are significantly improved after about six treatments. The average total number of treatments given is nine. Some people need fewer treatments and some need more. You can discuss this with your doctor.

After completing the course of ECT, you are likely to need to continue to take medication to remain well. Your doctor will discuss this with you.

## **Are there any side effects?**

Side effects will be discussed with you before you are asked to consent to the treatment.

ECT commonly causes the following brief side effects (the numbers in brackets are the percentages of patients who reported each side effect in a recent national survey):

- Headache (78%)
- Confusion (54%)
- General aches and pains (30%)

These symptoms generally clear up within an hour or two after each treatment.

Additionally, ECT can hinder your brain's ability to form new memories for a few days or more after each treatment. Because ECT is usually given twice weekly, in practice this means that you may not form many long-lasting memories during the whole period of ECT treatment, usually about a month or so. Most patients (85%) report this form of temporary memory impairment, which almost always clears within a month of your last treatment.

A small minority of patients report small gaps in longer-term memories that can persist after ECT. But some patients with depressive illness who have **not** had ECT report this too, so it may be caused by the illness itself. ECT certainly cannot cause a complete loss of long-term memory. It cannot cause you to forget basic facts about yourself or your family. It cannot damage your intelligence.

### **What may happen if ECT is not given?**

If your doctor has recommended you have ECT, it is likely that your symptoms are prolonged and/or severe. If you do not have ECT there is a risk that your symptoms will not improve in the foreseeable future or even worsen. But every patient is different and you should ask your doctor about your specific situation.

## **Are there any alternatives to ECT?**

The main alternative treatment in severe depressive illness is medication.

There are various types of medication which can be given for this illness. There may be reasons why certain types of medication may not be suitable or safe in your case. Your doctor can discuss these options or restrictions with you.

Furthermore, talking therapies can sometimes be a treatment option.

## **Contacting the ECT Suite**

If you have any questions or concerns about ECT, you can call the staff in the ECT Suite between 8am and 1pm on Tuesdays and Fridays. At any other time, you can call Afton Ward and they will direct you to a member of the ECT team.

ECT Suite, Sevenacres: **01983 534087**

Afton Ward, Sevenacres: **01983 552393**

Our Lead Nurse is **Mandy Tate**.

Our address is:

### **ECT Suite**

Sevenacres

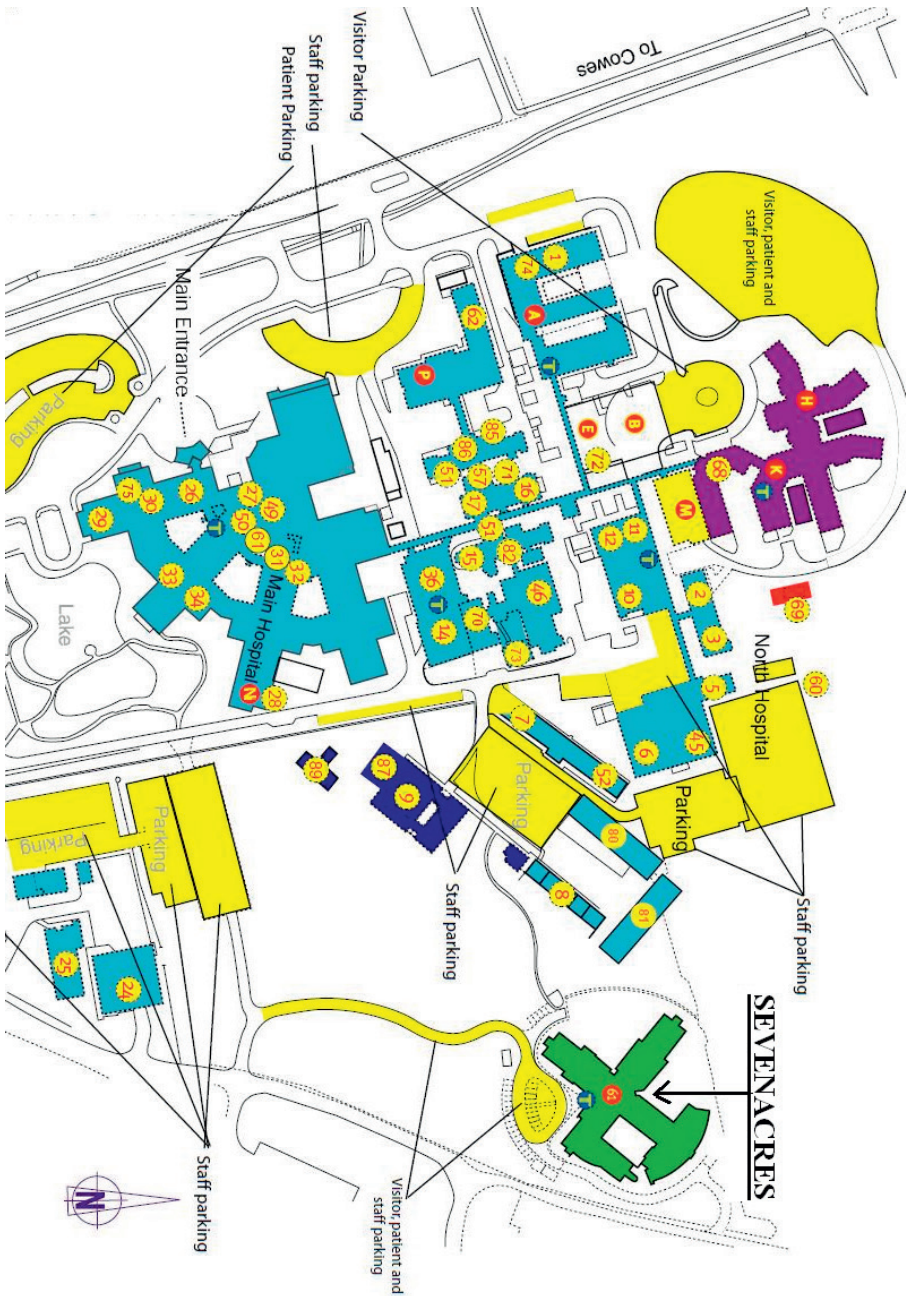
St Mary's Hospital

Newport

Isle of Wight

PO30 5TG

# Directions to Sevenacres



**Outpatient Appointments**

Day	Date	Time	Doctor/Nurse/ECT Suite

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**If you have any queries or concerns about the content of this leaflet please call (01983) 524081 and ask to speak to the relevant department.**

If you require this leaflet in another language, large print or another format, please contact the PALS Team, telephone **01983 534850**, who will advise you.

Valuables should not be brought into the hospital. If patients have to bring in valuable items they should ask a nurse to store them safely and request a receipt for the items. You may not be able to have the valuable items returned if the time of discharge from hospital is out of hours.

We are sorry but the Trust cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage to items not given for safe keeping.

You can get further information on all sorts of health issues online at: **www.nhs.uk**

For Health advice and out of hours GP service please call the NHS 111 service on: **111**

### **We Value Your Views On Our Service**

If you wish to comment on the care which you, your relative or friend has received, we will be pleased to hear from you. Please speak to the person in charge of the ward, clinic or service in the first instance or ask them to contact the PALS Team. If you wish to contact them directly, telephone on **01983 534850**.

Alternatively you may prefer to write to:

Chief Executive  
Isle Of Wight NHS Trust  
St Mary's Hospital  
Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5TG

You can also share any concerns you have about our services with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on **03000 61 61 61** or at **enquiries@cqc.org.uk**

All NHS sites are no smoking areas.

If you would like help and advice to stop smoking please call: Freephone 0800 169 0 169 to talk to the NHS Smoking Helpline.