

# Electroconvulsive Treatment

What it is, your rights, and having your say

OFFICIAL

## Help with this document

The purpose of this document is to:

- give you information about Electroconvulsive Treatment (ECT), also called Electroconvulsive Therapy;
- support you with considering your options and making an informed decision about ECT; and
- support you to think about what questions you can ask your treating team. You can use the 'Your Notes' section at the end of this document to write down any questions you might have.

You should also be given a Statement of Rights document that explains your legal rights under the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022 (the Act)*. If not, ask your treating team to provide you with one.

You have the right to support. You can:

- Ask your treating team to support you with understanding this information.
- Your treating team includes your psychiatrist. A psychiatrist is a doctor who diagnoses or treats mental illnesses.
- Ask a support person, such as a family member, kin, carer, friend, or advocate to support you with understanding this information
- See the 'Get Help' section of this sheet for contact details of organisations that can provide support.

You have the right to an interpreter.

- For help in your language, contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450.
- To communicate in Auslan, visit the [About the National Relay Service \(NRS\) | Access Hub](https://www.accesshub.gov.au/about-the-nrs) <[www.accesshub.gov.au/about-the-nrs](https://www.accesshub.gov.au/about-the-nrs)>.



## Information for psychiatrists

Psychiatrists should:

- Give this document to the consumer, in addition to the ECT Statement of Rights. The documents should be given as early as possible to give plenty of time to the consumer to have a conversation with you before treatment.
- Support you to understand information in this document.
- Support the consumer to make an informed decision about ECT.

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# What is ECT?

Electroconvulsive Treatment (ECT), also sometimes called Electroconvulsive Therapy, is a medical procedure that sends electricity through the brain to cause a seizure. The electricity is sent through small stick-on pads or hand-held tools that are placed on your scalp. ECT is done after you have been given injections and medications so that you are unconscious, and your muscles are relaxed, during the procedure. This will make sure you do not feel anything or know what is happening during the treatment.

People can have different experiences of receiving ECT, they might experience it positively or negatively or somewhere in between.

ECT is given as a course of treatment, meaning you will likely have a number of separate sessions of treatment over a period of time.

The most common use of ECT is for the treatment of severe depression, mania, or psychosis. It might be recommended for you because:

- Other treatments have not worked to reduce your mental health symptoms,
- The psychiatrist thinks that your mental health symptoms are too severe to wait for other treatments to work, or
- ECT has helped to reduce your mental health symptoms in the past.

ECT can have effects on your mental health symptoms, your memory, and your ability to think.

## Effects on mental health symptoms

Psychiatrists believe that ECT can change the way the chemicals work in your brain. They believe these chemicals seem to reduce the symptoms of some mental health conditions by changing how parts of the brain that are involved in emotions interact with each other.

Reduction of mental health symptoms following ECT are different for people and may be affected by what your mental health diagnosis is and symptoms are. You can ask your psychiatrist if they think ECT will reduce your mental health symptoms or not, and by how much.

Studies also show that there is a difference in reduction of symptoms depending on what type of ECT is done<sup>12</sup>. See the 'Types of ECT' section in this document for more information.

### How quickly will ECT work?

Some people experience a reduction in symptoms quickly, others more slowly. You can ask your psychiatrist about this.

### How long will the effects of ECT last?

It is difficult to know how long a reduction of symptoms from ECT could last. Some people experience a reduction in symptoms for long periods afterwards, others for shorter periods, others not at all. Your

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<sup>1</sup> [ECT in the 21st century: ultrabrief pulse stimulation - Australian Prescriber \(tg.org.au\)](https://australianprescriber.tg.org.au/articles/ect-in-the-21st-century-ultrabrief-pulse-stimulation.html#:~:text=Summary,adverse%20effects%20are%20greatly%20reduced.)  
<https://australianprescriber.tg.org.au/articles/ect-in-the-21st-century-ultrabrief-pulse-stimulation.html#:~:text=Summary,adverse%20effects%20are%20greatly%20reduced.?

<sup>2</sup> [Cognitive side-effects of electroconvulsive therapy: what are they, how to monitor them and what to tell patients - PMC \(nih.gov\)](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7191622/) <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7191622/>

psychiatrist might suggest that you begin to take medication or change current medications to try to lengthen this period of time.

## Effects on memory and ability to think

ECT can reduce your ability to concentrate, learn new information, form new memories, and recall past events and facts. These effects are usually mild and short term but can sometimes be more severe and potentially longer lasting.

It is important to speak to your psychiatrist to understand how ECT could affect you. Following is some general information about how ECT can affect memory or thought processes<sup>3</sup>

Type of memory or thought process	How is this effected by ECT?	How long will the effect last?	How likely is it to happen to me?
<p>Concentration and new learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to learn new things and create new memories</li> <li>Ability to think and concentrate 'in the moment'</li> </ul>	<p>The possible effect is not the same for everyone and is not predictable.</p> <p>For example, some people can have difficulty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>remembering faces or names,</li> <li>focussing to read or meditate,</li> <li>retaining new general information.</li> </ul>	<p>It is usually for only the first few hours after ECT but can be for up to 2 weeks after.</p> <p>Some people report ongoing issues.</p>	<p>Many people report experiencing this for the first few hours.</p> <p>Not many people report that they continue to experience this for longer.</p> <p>This effect may be more likely for longer courses of ECT.</p>
<p>Loss of memory for things you have learned or experienced before</p>	<p>It is possible to forget life events that happened, or facts learnt, before having ECT.</p>	<p>It is usually significantly improved by 6 months after treatment, but some memories for things may not return.</p>	<p>Not many people report experiencing this. This effect is not well documented, however recent research suggests that 7% of people report some persistent memory loss 12 months after ECT. See the following note on ECT Research to find out why this effect is not well documented.</p> <p>This effect may be more likely for longer courses of ECT.</p>

<sup>3</sup> [Cognitive side-effects of electroconvulsive therapy: what are they, how to monitor them and what to tell patients - PMC \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7191622/), and [The experience of living after ECT: a qualitative meta-synthesis: Journal of Mental Health: Vol 30, No 4 \(tandfonline.com\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7191622/) <<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7191622/>>

## A Note on ECT Research

The research results on ECT vary. It is difficult to say how many people experience effects on memory and ability to think. It is also difficult to say how much the effects could be and how long they last.

The reason the results are different could be because researchers:

- Find it hard to tell the difference between what might be caused by ECT and what might be a symptom of a mental health condition,
- Usually review people's memory and ability to think soon after they have had ECT, and not months later,
- Don't often ask people who have had ECT if they have had long term effects and how they feel about that.

## Personal experiences of ECT

People have different opinions about ECT. The following may affect how you view ECT:

- If you experience a reduction in your mental health symptoms or not, and how you feel about this.
- If you experience effects on your memory, or ability to think and learn or not, and how you feel about this.
- If you think you were given enough information and support to make an informed decision about having ECT.
- If you trust the mental health and wellbeing staff or not.<sup>4</sup>
- If you are choosing to have ECT or if you don't want it and have been ordered to have it by the Mental Health Tribunal.<sup>5</sup> The Act recognises that having compulsory treatment may significantly limit a person's human rights and may cause possible harm, including serious distress. For more information about compulsory ECT, see the 'your rights' section of this document.

**There are questions and space for you to take notes at the end of this document. You can use this when talking to your psychiatrist.**

## Types of ECT

There are three different types of ECT:

- Bilateral ECT: when the electricity is passed across both sides of your brain for usually 1 millisecond.
- Unilateral ECT: when the electricity passes one side of your brain for usually 0.5 – 1 millisecond.
- Ultra-brief ECT: when the electricity passes through a smaller area of one or both sides of your brain for usually 0.25 – 0.3 millisecond.<sup>6,7,8</sup>

You can ask your psychiatrist which type of ECT they recommend for you.

<sup>4</sup> [Care, control and the Electroconvulsive Therapy \(ECT\) ritual: Making sense of polarised patient narratives - ORA - Oxford University Research Archive](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Landmark judgment strengthens patients' rights in compulsory electroconvulsive treatment cases | Victoria Legal Aid](#)

<sup>6</sup> [ECT in the 21st century: ultrabrief pulse stimulation - Australian Prescriber \(tg.org.au\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Cognitive side-effects of electroconvulsive therapy: what are they, how to monitor them and what to tell patients - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Electroconvulsive therapy \(ECT\) | Royal College of Psychiatrists \(rcpsych.ac.uk\)](#)

## How many treatments will I have?

ECT is usually between 6 and 12 treatments. These are given two or three times a week, usually for three or four weeks, but this changes from person to person.

Your psychiatrist may also recommend having ECT treatment weekly, fortnightly, or monthly after your initial course has finished. This is often called maintenance ECT. This could be because,

- they think it will help to continue to reduce your symptoms for a longer period, or
- they are waiting to see if a new medication you are on reduces your symptoms.

If you have chosen to have ECT (voluntary), you can choose to stop having treatments at any time if you no longer want ECT.

If you have been ordered to have ECT by the Mental Health Tribunal, the Tribunal's order will tell you:

- **the duration** - no longer than 6 months, and
- **how many treatments you will have** - no more than 12 treatments.

You can see the 'When must my psychiatrist stop giving me compulsory ECT?' section of this document for more information.

## What happens when I get ECT?

Timeframe	What happens
Deciding about ECT	<p>Your psychiatrist will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess your capacity to give informed consent to ECT.</li> <li>• Provide you information about ECT and give you time to ask questions.</li> <li>• Discuss the expected effect on your mental health symptoms, memory and ability to think, including providing you with written information and maybe show you a video.</li> <li>• Check your health to find out if ECT is safe for you. This can be through blood tests, an ECG (electrocardiogram), a chest x ray, or CAT scan (computerized axial tomography).</li> <li>• Check if any other physical illness or conditions you have might mean you shouldn't have ECT.</li> <li>• Check if you are on any medications and whether you need to stop having them while you have ECT.</li> <li>• If you are having compulsory treatment under the Act:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Check if you have an <a href="https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/advance-statements-of-preferences">Advance Statement of Preferences</a> &lt;https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/advance-statements-of-preferences&gt; and think about what you've written in it. This is a document you can make that explains what you want to happen if you receive compulsory assessment or treatment. See the 'more information' section of this document to learn more.</li> <li>– Check if you have a <a href="https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/supported-decision-making/nominated-support-persons">Nominated Support Person</a> &lt;https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/supported-decision-making/nominated-support-persons&gt; or advocate and ask them what your views and preferences are so that they can consider them. This is a person you formally choose to support and advocate for you if you receive compulsory assessment or treatment. See the 'more information' section of this document to learn more.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Timeframe	What happens
Before having ECT	<p>You should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not have anything to eat or drink, including water, for at least 6 hours before a treatment unless your psychiatrist or nurse has said this is OK.</li> <li>• Tell your psychiatrist or nurse if you had anything to eat or drink in this time.</li> <li>• Wear loose and comfortable clothing.</li> <li>• Not take any medication that you usually take without checking with your psychiatrist or nurse that it is safe to do so.</li> <li>• Tell the psychiatrist if there is any chance you are pregnant or if you are breastfeeding.</li> <li>• Organise a support person to take you home after treatment if you are a day patient.</li> </ul>
When you arrive to have ECT	<p>Before the treatment you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have your vital signs checked by a nurse, such as your blood pressure and temperature.</li> <li>• Be given an ID bracelet and taken to a waiting room.</li> </ul>
In the ECT room	<p>When you are taken into the ECT room you will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A blood pressure cuff on an arm or leg or both.</li> <li>• A clip on a finger to check your pulse and oxygen levels.</li> <li>• Small stick-on pads on your forehead and behind your ears to record your brain's electrical activity.</li> <li>• Cords on your chest, arms, and legs to check your heart rate.</li> <li>• An oxygen mask over your mouth and nose.</li> <li>• A mouthguard to protect your teeth.</li> <li>• An injection of an anaesthetic to put you to sleep.</li> <li>• An injection to relax your muscles.</li> </ul>
During ECT	<p>You will be put to sleep for about 10 – 15 minutes.</p> <p>While you are unconscious:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The psychiatrist will put small stick-on pads, or hand-held tools, on your head to send a short electrical charge to your brain. This will cause a seizure that usually lasts about 30 seconds.</li> <li>• The psychiatrist, the anaesthetist, and a nurse will keep checking your heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen levels, and the electrical activity in your brain.</li> </ul>
After ECT	<p>When you wake up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurses will be continually checking your vital signs (blood pressure, heart rate, oxygen levels, breathing rate and level of alertness) for one hour. If there are any concerns, they will alert the psychiatrist or anaesthetists.</li> <li>• You may feel tired and confused for a short time as the anaesthetic wears off.</li> <li>• You may have a headache, muscle aches, soreness, or feel sick.</li> <li>• You will be in the recovery room and will be given food and drink when it is safe.</li> </ul>
Leaving the ECT room	<p>Once the nurses say you are ready to leave:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You will return to your room, if in hospital.</li> <li>• You can return home if you are a day patient. You will need a support person such as a family member or friend to take you home.</li> </ul>
24 hours after ECT	<p>For 24 hours after each treatment, you should not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drive a car or any other vehicle.</li> </ul>

Timeframe	What happens
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operate machinery.</li> <li>Make important decisions or sign a legal document (such as a contract or lease), drink alcohol or take recreational drugs.</li> </ul>

## You have rights

You have rights when you are given Electroconvulsive treatment (ECT) under the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022*.

Some of the rights are:

- You have the right to the least restrictive assessment and treatment reasonably available.
- You have the right to information.
- You have the right to support.
- You have the right to help with making decisions.
- You have the right to feel safe and respected.
- You have rights if you are a First Nations person.
- You have a right to communication.
- You have the right to advocacy support.
- You have the right to legal advice.
- You have the right to a [second psychiatric opinion](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/second-psychiatric-opinions) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/second-psychiatric-opinions>.
- You have the right to make an [Advance Statement of Preferences](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/advance-statements-of-preferences) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/advance-statements-of-preferences>.
- You have the right to a [Nominated Support Person](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/supported-decision-making/nominated-support-persons) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/supported-decision-making/nominated-support-persons>
- You have the right to make a complaint.

You also have the right to access your information and ask for changes.

A Statement of Rights document explains your rights in detail. Ask for a Statement of Rights document from your treating team if you don't have one.

**There are questions and space for you to take notes at the end of this document. You can use this when talking to your psychiatrist.**

## You have the right to support to make an informed decision.

Some of the things that can help you make an informed decision are:

- You should be given enough time.
- You should be given enough information.
- You can discuss with your psychiatrist about the process and effects of ECT.
- You can ask for appropriate supports, for example information in different formats (video, audio, Easy English etc.).
- You can discuss with your family, kin, carer, supporter, or advocate.
- You can read the ECT Statement of Rights to get more information about your rights under the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022*.

- You can get legal advice from a lawyer.

## How can I express my views and preferences about ECT?

You can record your views and preferences about ECT by:

- Mentioning them in your Advance Statement of Preferences.
- Telling your Nominated Support Person.
- Getting support from an advocate.
- Getting a second psychiatric opinion.

See the 'get help' section of this document for a list of free services that can help.

## Can I make my own decision about having ECT?

You have the right to make your own decision about having ECT, unless your psychiatrist thinks you don't have the capacity to give informed consent.

Giving informed consent means that you have understood and considered the information you need to make a decision about receiving a treatment (e.g., ECT).

Your psychiatrist must start by assuming that you do have capacity to give informed consent. If your psychiatrist thinks you have capacity to give informed consent, they will ask you for your consent to ECT in writing before each treatment.

If you are under 18, your psychiatrist must always apply to the Tribunal to give you ECT, including when you have given informed consent.

## What if I do have capacity to give informed consent?

**You will have capacity to give informed consent to a treatment if you can:**



- understand the information you're given about that treatment



- remember that information,



- use or weigh (e.g. think about positives and negatives) that information and



- communicate your decision.

To assess your capacity, your psychiatrist must:

- Start by assuming that you do have capacity.
- Give you support to build your capacity.
- Check your capacity at a time and in a place when it is most likely to be an accurate assessment.
- Assess your capacity before each treatment as it can change.

If you are 18 or over, and your psychiatrist says you do have capacity, you can give informed consent to have or not have ECT.

If you are under 18, your psychiatrist must always apply to the Tribunal to give you ECT, including when you have given informed consent.

### If I have capacity to give informed consent to ECT...

Can I say yes?	Can I say no?	Can I change my mind?
<p>If you want to have ECT, you must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have capacity to give informed consent to have it, and</li> <li>• provide consent in writing.</li> </ul> <p>This is called Voluntary ECT.</p>	<p>If you don't want to have ECT, you can choose not to have it, provided a psychiatrist thinks you have capacity to give informed consent.</p>	<p>If you are having Voluntary ECT, you can change your mind and stop having ECT. This is called withdrawing consent. You can withdraw consent at any point during ECT treatments if a psychiatrist thinks you have capacity to give informed consent.</p> <p>If you have said no to ECT previously, you can change your mind and say yes to ECT provided you have capacity to give informed consent.</p>

If at any point a psychiatrist thinks you don't have capacity to give informed consent, you can read the information in the 'What if I don't have capacity to give informed consent' section of this document to find out more.

### Did you know?

- If you lose capacity to give informed consent after previously providing consent, then the psychiatrist cannot continue to perform ECT without getting approval from the Mental Health Tribunal (the Tribunal).
- If you have written in your [Advance Statement of Preferences](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/advance-statements-of-preferences) <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/advance-statements-of-preferences>> that you want to have ECT – your psychiatrist will still need to get approval from the Tribunal to give you ECT if they think you don't have capacity to give informed consent at this point in time.

If you're under 18, your psychiatrist must apply to the Tribunal for approval, even if you or your parent or guardian have given consent to have ECT.

## What if I don't have capacity to give informed consent?

Your psychiatrist will assess your capacity to give informed consent before each treatment.

Before deciding you don't have capacity to give informed consent, your psychiatrist must think about whether you might have capacity if you were given appropriate supports.

Some examples of appropriate supports include:

- Giving you more information.
- Giving you information in a different way.
- Communicating with you in a different physical or sensory environment.
- Using an interpreter if you need one.
- Writing things down for you to help you remember.
- Making sure you have enough time to make a decision.
- Asking you if you would like support from family or friend and/or an advocate.

Your psychiatrist must:

- Give you a statement of rights, which includes your right to get a second psychiatric opinion, a non-legal advocate and/or lawyer.
- Consider your [Advance Statement of Preferences](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/advance-statements-of-preferences) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/advance-statements-of-preferences> if you have one and speak to your [Nominated Support Person](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/supported-decision-making/nominated-support-persons) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/supported-decision-making/nominated-support-persons> if you have one.

If your psychiatrist then thinks you still don't have capacity to give informed consent to ECT, they can apply to the Tribunal to get approval to give you ECT.

You can choose to access legal assistance. This will include advice and may include representation at the Tribunal if this happens.

You can only be given ECT if the Tribunal approves it. This is called **Compulsory ECT**.

For adults, ECT can only be given without your consent if the Tribunal has decided:

- you don't have capacity to give informed consent; and
- ECT is the least restrictive way to treat you; and
- if you are not receiving compulsory treatment under the Act,
  - your *instructional directive* says you can have ECT, or
  - if you don't have an instructional directive, your medical treatment decision maker consents to you having ECT.

Please note that these decisions would differ slightly for young people under the Act.

Learn more about [Appointing a medical treatment decision maker - Office of the Public Advocate](https://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/your-rights/your-healthcare/appointing-a-medical-treatment-decision-maker) <https://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/your-rights/your-healthcare/appointing-a-medical-treatment-decision-maker> and [Making an advance care directive - Office of the Public Advocate](https://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=23&catid=19) (instructional directive) <https://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/index.php?option=com\_content&view=article&id=23&catid=19>.

You can see the 'When must my psychiatrist stop giving me compulsory ECT?' section of this document for more information.

### Did you know?

If your psychiatrist believes you don't have capacity to give informed consent to ECT, you can ask them to explain why.

Least restrictive means you need to be given as much freedom as you can, based on your individual circumstances. What is restrictive for one person might not be restrictive for someone else.

# What happens if you have a tribunal hearing?

Some of the information in this table will differ for young people under the Act.

Find out what happens at each stage of the Tribunal process.

Tribunal process	Details
Your psychiatrist tells you that ECT is being considered for you	<p>Your psychiatrist thinks you meet the criteria for an application to the Tribunal because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You don't have capacity to give informed consent; and</li> <li>• ECT is the least restrictive way to treat you; and</li> <li>• If you are not receiving compulsory treatment, your instructional directive or your medical treatment decision maker says you can have ECT.</li> </ul>
Your psychiatrist submits the ECT application to the Tribunal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Tribunal must have a hearing to decide on the ECT application within 5 business days of receiving it.</li> <li>• Your psychiatrist can ask for an urgent ECT hearing if it is required as soon as possible to save your life; prevent serious damage to your health; or prevent you suffering or continuing to suffer significant pain or distress. This might mean the Tribunal hearing happens very quickly.</li> </ul>
You can prepare for the Tribunal hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your psychiatrist must give you a copy of the report and to view the documents your treating team have given to the Mental Health Tribunal at least two business days before the hearing. at least 2 business days before the hearing.</li> <li>• You have a right to appear before the Tribunal and can also choose someone to represent you.</li> <li>• You can speak to a lawyer to help you prepare for the hearing.</li> <li>• You can ask staff or an advocate to assist you to speak to a lawyer.</li> <li>• You can provide your own statement or evidence at the hearing.</li> </ul>
To decide if you should have ECT, the tribunal must consider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• your views and preferences about ECT and any other alternative treatment that is reasonably available.</li> <li>• if you are not receiving compulsory treatment, any relevant values directive given by you and the views of your medical treatment decision maker.</li> <li>• your <a href="https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/advance-statements-of-preferences">Advance Statement of Preferences</a> &lt;https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/advance-statements-of-preferences&gt;, if you have one.</li> <li>• the views of your <a href="https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/supported-decision-making/nominated-support-persons">Nominated Support Person</a> &lt;https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/supported-decision-making/nominated-support-persons&gt; guardian, or carer if relevant</li> <li>• the likely consequences if the ECT is not performed.</li> <li>• whether the ECT is likely to reduce the symptoms of mental illness.</li> <li>• any <a href="https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/second-psychiatric-opinions">second psychiatric opinion</a> &lt;https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/second-psychiatric-opinions&gt; that has been obtained.</li> </ul>
If the Tribunal approves you having ECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can ask your psychiatrist how they have assessed your capacity prior to each treatment.</li> </ul>

Tribunal process	Details
If the <b>Tribunal does not approve</b> you having ECT	<p>The Tribunal will not approve ECT if they decide that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you are able to give informed consent; or</li> <li>• ECT is not the least restrictive treatment for you or</li> <li>• If you are not having compulsory treatment, your instructional directive or medical treatment decision maker has not given consent.</li> </ul>
After the Tribunal hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you have the right to request a statement of reasons for the Tribunal's decision within 20 business days of the Tribunal's telling you what their decision was.</li> <li>• You have the right to apply to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal for a review of the decision if you're not happy with it. You can't go back to the Mental Health Tribunal to challenge the decision they've made about ECT.</li> </ul>

Your psychiatrist can reapply to the Mental Health Tribunal for a further course of treatment if they think you don't have capacity to give informed consent, and they are satisfied that ECT is the least restrictive treatment for you.

## When must my psychiatrist stop giving me compulsory ECT?

For adults receiving compulsory ECT, your psychiatrist must stop giving it to you if any of the below reasons apply to you.

- all the treatments for the course of ECT have been given to you
- the end-date in the order has passed
- you are no longer a receiving compulsory treatment under the Act
- your psychiatrist thinks you now have the capacity to give informed consent and do not want ECT
- your psychiatrist thinks that ECT is no longer the least restrictive treatment option for you

Least restrictive means you need to be given as much freedom as you can, based on your individual circumstances. What is restrictive for one person might not be restrictive for someone else.

Relevant factors under the Act differ slightly depending on if you are an adult or young person, and if you are receiving voluntary treatment. You can speak to a lawyer to learn more.

## Your notes

- You can use the text boxes in this section to make notes. There are questions that you might like to ask yourself, or your psychiatrist.
- You can pick which questions would help you.
- You can remove this section and take it with you when you meet with your psychiatrist.

## What do I think about having ECT?

- What are my views and preferences about ECT and why?
- What are the positives and negatives of ECT for me?
- Are there other treatment options I would prefer instead of ECT?
- If I want ECT, what type of ECT do I want to have?

Your notes...

## Questions I can ask my psychiatrist about having ECT.

- How likely is it that ECT will reduce my mental health symptoms? How quickly will this happen? How long will it last?
- How likely is it that ECT will impact my memory and ability to think? How could it impact me and how long could this last? Will you run tests on my memory and ability to think before and after treatment?
- If I have had ECT before, are there any increased risks for me if I have it again?
- What type of ECT do you recommend? Can I have a different type if I want this?
- How long is my course of ECT treatment? How many sessions will I have over how many weeks?
- Are there treatment options other than ECT available to me? Are different treatments available at different hospitals?

Your notes...

## Do I know my rights?

- Do I need an interpreter?
- Do I want help with understanding information in this document?
- Was I given the ECT Statement of Rights?
- Has someone explained the Statement of Rights to me in a way that has meant I understand them?

Your notes...

## Have I given informed consent to have ECT?

- Do I consent to ECT now?
- If I consented to ECT recently, do I still want it?
- Was I given enough time to make an informed decision about ECT?
- Was I given enough information to make an informed decision about ECT?
- Do I have an [Advance Statement of Preferences](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/advance-statements-of-preferences) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/advance-statements-of-preferences> and does this express my preferences regarding ECT? If I don't have one, do I want to make one?
- Do I have a [Nominated Support Person](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/supported-decision-making/nominated-support-persons) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/supported-decision-making/nominated-support-persons> and/or advocate who knows my preferences and can support me to express them? If I don't have one, do I want to choose one?
- Do I need legal advice or non-legal advocacy?

Your notes...

## Questions I can ask my psychiatrist about informed consent.

- Do you believe I have capacity to give informed consent? If not, why? How can you support me to gain capacity?
- Do I have to have ECT if I don't want to?
- Has the Mental Health Tribunal ordered me to have ECT? If yes, can I have a copy of my order?
- Is ECT the least restrictive way to treat me?
- If I have a [Nominated Support Person](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/supported-decision-making/nominated-support-persons) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/supported-decision-making/nominated-support-persons> or advocate, have you spoken to them?
- If I have an [Advance Statement of Preferences](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/advance-statements-of-preferences) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/advance-statements-of-preferences>, have you reviewed it? If you are not following my preferences, can you explain why?

Your notes...

## What do I want to tell my psychiatrist to prepare to have ECT?

- Have I told my psychiatrist about my other health issues and if I'm on any medication?
- If I am having ECT as an outpatient, who will I ask to take me home after my treatment?
- What do I need to help me feel comfortable, safe, and in control when having ECT and after I have had ECT?

Your notes...

## Questions I can ask my psychiatrist to prepare to have ECT.

- What are the risks for me having an anaesthetic?
- Can I have a tour of the ECT room before my treatment?
- Can you write important things down for me so that I remember?
- Can I have a friend, family member or my [Nominated Support Person](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/supported-decision-making/nominated-support-persons) with me before and after the treatment?
- Who can I ask if I have more questions after our meeting and before the treatment and what is the best way to contact them?
- What support is available to me to emotionally prepare for ECT? What support is available to me if I experience problems with my memory or ability to think?

Your notes...

# My record of ECT

You can use this table to record your experience of ECT.

Session number	Date	How is ECT affecting me? (e.g. mental health symptoms, memory, and ability to think)	Have I raised this with my treating team? What have they suggested to support me with these effects?	What, if anything, do I need now? (including any actions I might take?)
1	Pick the date	Your notes	Your notes	Your notes
2	Pick the date	Your notes	Your notes	Your notes
3	Pick the date	Your notes	Your notes	Your notes
4	Pick the date	Your notes	Your notes	Your notes
5	Pick the date	Your notes	Your notes	Your notes
6	Pick the date	Your notes	Your notes	Your notes

Session number	Date	How is ECT affecting me? (e.g. mental health symptoms, memory, and ability to think)	Have I raised this with my treating team? What have they suggested to support me with these effects?	What, if anything, do I need now? (including any actions I might take?)
7	Pick the date	Your notes	Your notes	Your notes
8	Pick the date	Your notes	Your notes	Your notes
9	Pick the date	Your notes	Your notes	Your notes
10	Pick the date	Your notes	Your notes	Your notes
11	Pick the date	Your notes	Your notes	Your notes
12	Pick the date	Your notes	Your notes	Your notes

# Get Help

Some free services that can help are:

Service	Details	Contact details
Independent Mental Health Advocacy	Independent advocacy service that helps you to understand and speak up for your rights for people receiving, or at risk of receiving, compulsory treatment.	1300 947 820 <a href="http://www.imha.vic.gov.au">Independent Mental Health Advocacy   IMHA</a> <www.imha.vic.gov.au>
Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council	Free confidential advocacy service for people receiving voluntary treatment	9380 3900 <a href="http://www.vmiac.org.au">VMIAC</a> <www.vmiac.org.au>
Tandem	Support for families, carers and supporters of people with mental health challenges.	1800 314 325 <a href="http://www.tandemcarers.org.au">Tandem Carers</a> <www.tandemcarers.org.au>
Mental Health Legal Rights Service	Free legal assistance	1800 849 806 <a href="http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/mental-health-legal-rights-service">Mental Health Legal Rights Service</a> <www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/mental-health-legal-rights-service>
Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service	Legal assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	9418 5920 <a href="http://www.vals.org.au">VALS</a> <www.vals.org.au>
Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission	Independent complaints service	1800 246 054 <a href="http://www.mhwc.vic.gov.au">Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission</a> <www.mhwc.vic.gov.au>
Translating and Interpreting Service	Help in your language	131 450 <a href="http://www.tisnational.gov.au">Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)</a> <www.tisnational.gov.au>
Second Psychiatric Opinion Service	Free second psychiatric opinions to eligible people receiving compulsory treatment.	1300 503 426 <a href="http://www.secondopinion.org.au">Second Psychiatric Opinion Service</a> <www.secondopinion.org.au>
Mental Health Tribunal	An independent tribunal that makes and reviews Treatment Orders, hears applications for revocation of Temporary Treatment Orders, and reviews Orders of security patients.	1800 242 703 <a href="http://www.mht.vic.gov.au">Mental Health Tribunal</a> <www.mht.vic.gov.au>

## More information

This information was developed using co-design workshops, membership included the peak bodies VMIAAC and Tandem, Consumer Consultants, Speaking From Experience (SFE – IMHA consumer advisory group) members, consumers who had accessed IMHA services as well as clinical staff including nursing and psychiatric. Most members had a lived or living experience of the mental health system including ECT. The group committed to producing information that would allow consumers and their supporters to make their own decisions about ECT and know where else they could get further information and support. The information has been produced to supplement the ECT Statement of Rights.

## Websites

- [Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-2022/002)  
<<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-2022/002>>
- [Office of the Chief Psychiatrist - Electroconvulsive treatment \(ECT\) guideline](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/chief-psychiatrist/electroconvulsive-treatment-guideline-mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-2022)  
<[www.health.vic.gov.au/chief-psychiatrist/electroconvulsive-treatment-guideline-mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-2022](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/chief-psychiatrist/electroconvulsive-treatment-guideline-mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-2022)>
- [Victoria Legal Aid - Electroconvulsive treatment information](http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/electroconvulsive-treatment)  
<[www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/electroconvulsive-treatment](http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/electroconvulsive-treatment)>
- [Independent Mental health Advocacy - Electroconvulsive treatment information](http://www.imha.vic.gov.au/electroconvulsive-treatment-ect)  
<[www.imha.vic.gov.au/electroconvulsive-treatment-ect](http://www.imha.vic.gov.au/electroconvulsive-treatment-ect)>
- [Mental Health Tribunal – Electroconvulsive treatment information](http://www.mht.vic.gov.au/electroconvulsive-treatment-ect)  
<[www.mht.vic.gov.au/electroconvulsive-treatment-ect](http://www.mht.vic.gov.au/electroconvulsive-treatment-ect)>
- Advance Statement of Preferences
  - [Department of Health - Advance statement of preferences](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/advance-statements-of-preferences)  
<[www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/advance-statements-of-preferences](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/advance-statements-of-preferences)>
  - [Independent Mental health Advocacy – I want to make an Advance Statement of Preferences](http://www.imha.vic.gov.au/i-want-make-advance-statement-preferences)  
<[www.imha.vic.gov.au/i-want-make-advance-statement-preferences](http://www.imha.vic.gov.au/i-want-make-advance-statement-preferences)>
- Nominated Support Persons
  - [Department of Health - Nominated support persons](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/supported-decision-making/nominated-support-persons)  
<[www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/supported-decision-making/nominated-support-persons](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/supported-decision-making/nominated-support-persons)>
  - [Independent Mental health Advocacy – I want to nominate a person to support me](http://www.imha.vic.gov.au/i-want-nominate-person-support-me)  
<[www.imha.vic.gov.au/i-want-nominate-person-support-me](http://www.imha.vic.gov.au/i-want-nominate-person-support-me)>
- [Second Psychiatric Opinions – Department of Health](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/second-psychiatric-opinions)  
<[www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/second-psychiatric-opinions](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/second-psychiatric-opinions)>
- [Victorian Department of Health Statement of Rights](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/statement-of-rights)  
<[www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/statement-of-rights](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act-handbook/statement-of-rights)>
- [Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists - Electroconvulsive treatment information](http://www.yourhealthinmind.org/ect)  
<[www.yourhealthinmind.org/ect](http://www.yourhealthinmind.org/ect)>
- [Royal College of Psychiatrists - Electroconvulsive treatment information](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/treatments-and-wellbeing/ect)  
<[www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/treatments-and-wellbeing/ect](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/treatments-and-wellbeing/ect)>

## Research

- [Recipients' experience with information provision for electroconvulsive therapy \(ECT\)](http://bmcp psychiatry.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12888-022-03720-w)  
<[bmcp psychiatry.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12888-022-03720-w](http://bmcp psychiatry.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12888-022-03720-w)>



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- [The experience of living after ECT: a qualitative meta-synthesis](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09638237.2020.1739244)  
<<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09638237.2020.1739244>>
- [Care, control and the Electroconvulsive Therapy \(ECT\) ritual: Making sense of polarised patient narratives](https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:0efb8016-71c1-4a60-83e3-cbea8aa06686)  
<<https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:0efb8016-71c1-4a60-83e3-cbea8aa06686>>
- [Cognitive side-effects of electroconvulsive therapy: what are they, how to monitor them and what to tell patients](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7191622/)  
<<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7191622/>>

To receive this document in another format, phone the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email [mhwa@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:mhwa@health.vic.gov.au)

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