

Gold Coast Health

Electroconvulsive Therapy

Information for consumers, families and carers





What is Electroconvulsive Therapy?

Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) was developed in the 1930s when doctors noticed that people who had epileptic seizures experienced less depression and psychotic symptoms.

Over the years, delivery methods (electronic technology) and improved anaesthetics have increased the safety, quality and comfort for ECT for the patient.

Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) is a course of medical treatment for severe mental health conditions including major depression, bipolar disorder, and psychotic illnesses such as schizophrenia.

ECT is considered an effective, evidence-based treatment by:

- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP)
- QLD Mental Health Commission
- World Health Organisation.

ECT and Neurostimulation Suites



Treatment room

First, we want to show you our ECT Suites. At Gold Coast University Hospital the suite is located in F Block, Lower Ground Floor. At Robina Hospital our office is located in F Block and treatment is carried out in theatre.

Our ECT service is open on Monday and Wednesday from 7:00 am, and Friday from 8:00 am.

Waiting room

Our waiting room is where people come just before they have ECT.

Treatment room

ECT is carried out under a general anaesthetic in a treatment room.

Recovery

After ECT, you will be brought to the recovery room. It is staffed by the same nurses each time, so they know you and care for you as you wake up.

If you are an outpatient, this is where you will stay while you wait for your nominated responsible person to take you home.



Recovery room

Your ECT journey

Why has ECT been recommended for me?

Your doctor recommends ECT when:

You are suffering from a mental illness and have experienced one or more of the following:

Medications and therapies have not helped

The side-effects of medications are too severe

You have suicidal thoughts

You are not eating or drinking properly

ECT has been helpful in the past

What if I don't have the recommended ECT?

You might be in hospital longer or you might be unwell for longer

and

If you are not eating or drinking properly because of depression you might develop worsening medical problems

but you will still get the same quality of care and your doctor will talk to you about other options

Is ECT Safe?

ECT is among the safest medical treatments given under general anaesthesia.

All general anaesthesia carries a small risk of serious medical complications or even death, however with ECT this is extremely rare.

It is as safe to have ECT as it is to have a general anaesthetic for any other minor procedure.

As with any medical intervention, ECT has associated risks but our professional team is highly trained and will care for you skilfully every step of the way through your recovery.

If you do have other health problems (such as high blood pressure) it should still be possible for you to have ECT safely. Your doctor will ask another specialist to advise if there are grounds for concern.



What do I need to tell my doctor before ECT?

As with any general anaesthetic, we need to know:

- ☐ If you have caps or crowns on your teeth so we can minimise any issues.
- ☐ If you or anyone in your family has had difficulties with anaesthetics. About one in 10,000 people have an allergy to an anaesthetic.

We evaluate your medical and mental health and assess your memory thoroughly before, during and after your course of treatment.

What are the possible side-effects?

Some people have physical side effects after ECT.

You may wake up sleepy and confused but within 15 minutes these feelings generally improve.

Occasionally, people experience nausea, headache or muscle soreness after ECT. We treat this by giving appropriate medication if required.

Muscle soreness or jaw stiffness may happen after the first few treatments. It is due to the muscle relaxing medication we use.

Some people may experience bruising at the site of their anaesthetic injection.

You may have trouble remembering some things that happened during your course of ECT. Most people's memory returns to normal shortly after finishing ECT. In fact, your memory may actually be better once your mental health has improved.

Occasionally people may forget events that happened before ECT treatment and rarely this may persist longer term.

After each ECT treatment we test your memory and then individualise your treatment course to ensure you have the best clinical response with the least side effects.

What are the different types of ECT?

There are different types of ECT. Your doctor will talk to you about which type of ECT is best for you.

- Some people have bilateral ECT (two-sided). In bilateral ECT, electricity is passed from one side of the brain to the other.
- Some people have unilateral ECT (one-sided). In unilateral ECT, electricity is passed through just one side of the brain. Unilateral ECT causes less memory side-effects, but may work less effectively or require more treatments to work.

Must I have ECT if my doctor recommends it for me?

No. You can decline the treatment recommended by your doctor. Refusing ECT will not affect the quality of care you receive.

Consent to ECT

If you wish to have treatment, you will be asked to sign a form like the one below.

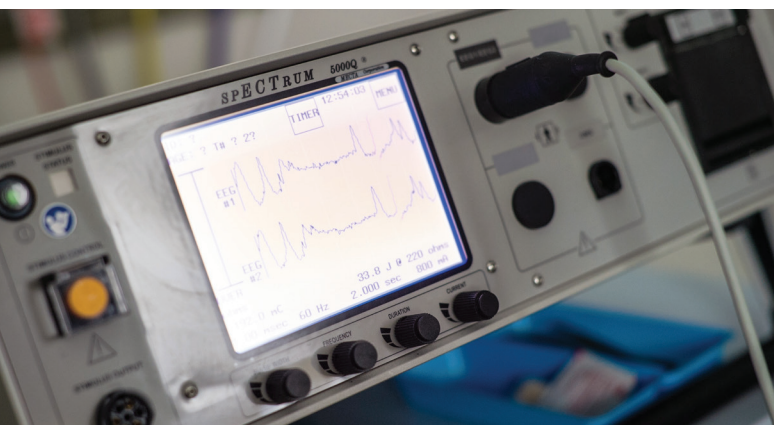
This consent form is to make sure you understand the risks and benefits of treatment. The form is not a contract. Even after you sign the form you can stop treatment at any time.

What if I am too unwell to decide about treatment or ECT?

Sometimes mental illnesses can be so severe that people are unable to make healthcare decisions for themselves.

Such persons have a right to effective, safe treatment and care.

If ECT is recommended by a doctor for a person who is unable to make health decisions, an application may be made to the Mental Health Review Tribunal for an authority to provide ECT treatment.



For information regarding the Mental Health Act 2016 speak to your doctor or visit: www.health.qld.gov.au/mental-health-act

Before ECT

As with all general anaesthetics, you must not eat or drink from midnight before morning treatment. No food or fluids, including lollies and chewing gum from midnight the night before.

- Please wear loose comfortable clothes and remove nail varnish from hands.
- You will have your physical observations recorded and identification confirmed.
- You should take your usual medications (for blood pressure or your heart) at the normal times before you come to the ECT. You will need to have your morning medicines earlier than usual (before 6.00 am) with a small sip of water. Your doctor can discuss this with you.
- Avoid smoking on the morning of ECT. You can request Nicotine Replacement Therapy patches on the day of treatment (not gum).
- If coming in from home, bring a book or magazine.
- You will be asked to empty your bladder when you arrive for your treatment.
- You will be offered some numbing cream for the back of your hand and front of your elbow to reduce discomfort of cannulation.

During ECT

- You walk to ECT with your nurse and will be directed to lie on a hospital trolley.
- You will be asked to remove any dentures, plates or prosthetics including glasses.
- An anaesthetist will place a small plastic cannula in the back of the hand or front of your elbow.
- A nurse will put stickers on your chest to monitor your heart – the ECG.
- The nurse places stickers on your forehead and behind your ear to monitor brain waves – the EEG.
- Your blood pressure is checked.
- You will be given a mask to breathe through.
- The anaesthetist then gives you an anaesthetic and you go off to sleep.
- The anaesthetist gives you a medication to relax your muscles: You are asleep for this.
- A small amount of electricity is passed through your brain to induce a seizure. You are asleep for this and will not remember anything.
- You have a controlled brain seizure or fit lasting about 20-40 seconds.
- You have another blood pressure reading.
- You wake up after a few minutes in the recovery suite.
- After 30 minutes we will test your memory.

After ECT

As an Inpatient

- You will need to stay in the recovery area for a minimum of 30 minutes then a nurse will take you back to your ward and you can have a meal and morning medications.
- Your vital signs will be monitored for a minimum of two hours during which time you are required to stay on the ward.

As an Outpatient

- You will need to stay in the recovery area until you are fully ready and safe to go home – this may take up to three hours.
- During this time your vital signs will be monitored and you will be provided with food and drinks.
- A doctor will review you to ensure you are safe to go home.
- You must be accompanied home in a car or taxi by a responsible nominated adult.

For 24 hours after ECT please:

- Make sure a responsible adult is with you at home.
- **Do not** drive because your reaction times will be slower after an anaesthetic.
- **Do not** operate machinery or do any heavy lifting.
- **Do not** drink alcohol or take drugs that have not been prescribed to you.
- **Do not** make any important decisions or sign any legal documents.



How often will I have ECT?

Our service operates on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. We recommend people have treatments until they are completely better or stop seeing an improvement. This may be up to three times per week.

Your response to ECT will be unique. Some people notice benefits as early as two treatments, while for others it may take up to seven or eight treatments before they notice any difference.

On average people have nine to 12 treatments of ECT but some people may need more.

ECT treatment diary

Some people find it helpful to keep a diary during their treatment to keep track of your progress by recording changes in mood and behaviour and to help remember important events. At the end of your ECT course, a doctor will evaluate your mental health, including your memory, via a series of interactive questions to assess the effectiveness and any side effects of your treatment.

You can keep track of your treatment by ticking off the boxes below:

	Monday	✓	Wednesday	✓	Friday	✓
Treatment date	Eg 20/10/2018	✓				

Questions for your nurse or doctor?



Your feedback is welcome, as we aim to consistently improve and achieve a quality of service that maintains the highest standards. Information on providing feedback is available on our website: www.goldcoast.health.qld.gov.au/get-involved/compliments-and-complaints

Further information

Independent Patient Rights Advisor

The Mental Health Act 2016 requires that you receive a **Statement of Rights** (available at the ECT suite) and are aware you may access the **Independent Patient Rights Advisor** on 1800 316 678.

The role of these advisers is to assist you, your family, carers and other support persons communicate with health practitioner about your treatment and care.

The Independent Patient Rights Advisor (IPRA) can provide patients and support people with information and assistance about their rights under the Mental Health Act 2016. They are trained to assist people to understand their rights and work with your clinical team to discuss concerns. An IPRA does not provide medical, legal or medication advice.



To view these documents or to learn more:
www.health.qld.gov.au/mental-health-act

Advanced Health Directive

An advance health directive is a document that allows you to make decisions for yourself about your healthcare. This document can be used at a future time if you become unwell and are unable to make decisions.

You can plan for future ECT using an advanced health directive to record your consent and treatment requirements.

This document allows you to:

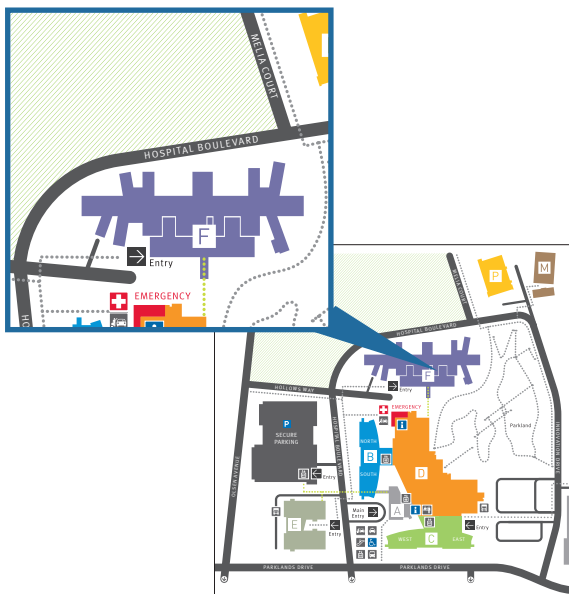
- discuss future treatment with your doctor and have a formal document to reflect your wishes
- appoint another person to make decisions about your treatment and care
- express your views, wishes and preferences about healthcare and personal matters.

You can make an advance health directive at any time you are well and able to make decisions. You should discuss making your advance health directive with a doctor who understands your mental health.

Location map

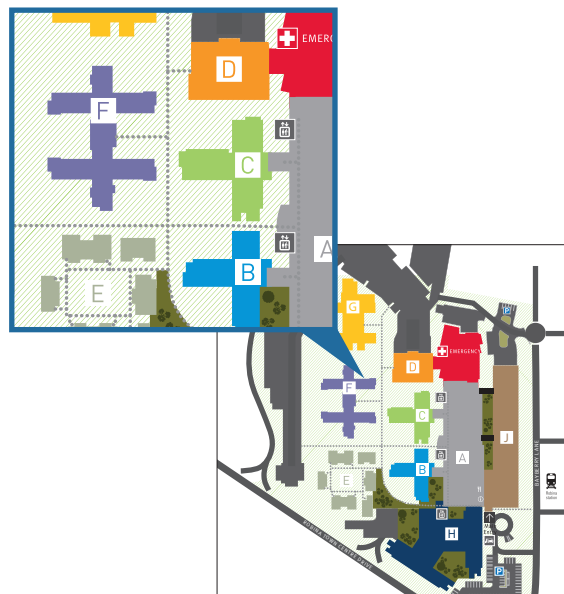
Gold Coast University Hospital

At Gold Coast University Hospital the suite is located in **F Block, Lower Ground Floor**.



Robina Hospital

At Robina Hospital our office is located in **F Block** and treatment is carried out in theatre.



Other important information

Useful contacts

Gold Coast Mental Health and Specialist Services

ECT Team

Gold Coast Univeristy Hospital Suite: 07 5687 7279

Robina Suite: 07 5668 6947

Southport Community Mental Health Team:
07 5687 9600

Palm Beach Community Mental Health Team:
07 5525 5661

Older Persons Community Mental Health:
07 5635 7000

Child and Youth Mental Health Service:
07 5687 9225

Alcohol and Other Drugs Service:
07 5687 9119

Acute Care Team 24hrs: 1300 642 255

Useful resources

beyondblue support service

p: 1300 224 636

w: www.beyondblue.org.au (search for "ECT")

Lifeline

p: 13 11 14

Multicultural Health Communication (multi-lingual resources)

w: www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au (search for "ECT")

SANE Australia helpline

p: 1800 187 263

w: www.sane.org/mental-health-and-illness/facts-and-guides

Suicide call back service:

p: 1300 659 467

UpToDate:

w: www.uptodate.com/contents/electroconvulsive-therapy-ect-beyond-the-basics



For further information contact the Gold Coast Mental Health and Specialist Services ECT and Neurostimulation Team.

Gold Coast University Hospital

1 Hospital Blvd, Southport QLD 4215

t: +61 7 5687 7279

Robina Hospital

2 Bayberry Lane, Robina QLD 4226

t: +61 7 5668 6947



Interpreter services

Gold Coast Health provides interpreter services for patients attending the hospital who are from non-English speaking backgrounds. If you require the assistance of an interpreter, please indicate this on your registration form and advise the hospital prior to any medical appointments.

Interpreter services are provided free-of-charge to all patients who require the service, including non-Medicare patients.



For further information, please visit the ***Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) and Neurostimulation Service*** website to view ***The ECT Journey video***.



Artwork produced for Gold Coast Health by Riki Salam, Weare27 Creative.