What is ECT?

Modern ECT is very safe and has proven to be quite effective. ECT is a very viable treatment option for patients whose medication or other treatments have failed to ease symptoms associated with depression, mania or other mental health issues. Since its introduction in 1930, ECT has been continually evolving. Today's ECT treatment utilizes innovative technology and finely tuned equipment to administer electrical stimulation to the brain, changing its activity and improving chemical balance.

Located at 230 East Ridgewood Avenue in Paramus, NJ, Bergen Regional Medical Center provides a comprehensive set of quality services including Long Term Care, Behavioral Health Care, Ambulatory and Acute Care. The Medical Center is a designated safety net facility for the State of New Jersey and is dedicated to providing care for vulnerable populations. BRMC also provides services for those eligible for health insurance or Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act.

Bergen Regional is both the largest hospital and the largest licensed nursing home in New Jersey. The hospital houses one of the most comprehensive mental health services in the state, which provides psychiatric and substance abuse treatments along the continuum of outpatient and inpatient settings. In addition, Bergen Regional has a full service emergency department, state of the art operating suites, and more than 20 ambulatory medical specialty clinics.
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For more information, call
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Is ECT right for me?
As the population in the United States is aging, the use of ECT in elderly patients, those 65 and older, is becoming an increasingly important clinical option.

ECT is usually considered after other treatment options, such as medication and psychotherapy, have failed. It is recommended for severe, treatment-resistant depression but is occasionally used to treat other mental health issues, such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia, as well. It also may be used in life-threatening circumstances, such as when a patient is unable to move or respond to the outside world (catalepsy), is suicidal, or is malnourished and neglecting self-care as a result of severe depression.

How is ECT administered?
Before ECT is administered, a person is sedated with general anesthesia and given a medication called a muscle relaxant to prevent movement during the procedure. An anesthesiologist monitors breathing, heart rate and blood pressure during the entire procedure, which is conducted by a trained psychiatrist. Electrodes are placed at precise locations on the head. Through the electrodes, a small electric current passes through the brain, causing a central seizure that lasts generally less than one minute. Because the patient is under anesthesia and has taken a muscle relaxant, there is no pain and the body shows no or minimal movement. The patient awakens five to ten minutes after the procedure ends. He or she may feel groggy at first as the anesthesia wears off. But after about an hour, the patient usually is alert and can resume normal activities although caution is recommended for a period of at least 24 hours post procedure.

What is the duration of ECT treatment?
The actual administration of electrical current only lasts a few seconds. However, in order to prepare for pre and post procedures, the patient will be in the treatment suite for 90-120 minutes. Most patients require anywhere between 6-12 treatments administered three times per week for several weeks. Sometimes more treatments are required depending on individual factors.

Where can I receive ECT treatment?
Bergen Regional Medical Center has one of the few geropsychiatry units in the state. This expertise has been expanded to include ECT. BRMC provides inpatient and outpatient maintenance ECT treatment.