



# NeuRA

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## BIPOLAR DISORDERS Factsheet

November 2021

### What is electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)?

In ECT, a seizure is electrically induced after the patient has been given a short-acting anaesthetic and is asleep. Although viewed as controversial, ECT is a well established psychiatric treatment with good evidence to support its effective and safe use. ECT is most often used as a treatment for severe depression that has not responded adequately to other treatments. It is also used as a first line treatment in depression where an urgent response is required as it works more quickly than medications. ECT's efficacy and safety are affected by a number of factors such as where electrodes are placed, the frequency of treatment, the degree to which the stimulus dose exceeds the seizure threshold and the dose and duration of concurrent medication.

### What is the evidence for ECT?

High quality evidence suggests a small effect of greater response to ECT treatment in people with bipolar depression compared to people with major depression (77% vs. 74% responded). Moderate to high quality evidence suggests fewer number of sessions are required for bipolar depression than for major depression. There were no differences in remission rates between these groups.

High quality evidence suggests longer duration of depressive episode and non-response to medication are associated with medium-sized effects of poorer response to ECT treatment. Moderate quality evidence suggests comorbid psychotic features may be associated with a small effect of poorer response to ECT treatment, and increasing age may be associated with a small effect of better response to ECT treatment.

For more information see the technical table

### HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

We are able to make significant advances due to the generosity of countless people. Your donation allows us to continue to work towards transforming lives. For information on how you can support our research, phone **1300 888 019** or make a secure donation at [www.neura.edu.au](http://www.neura.edu.au).



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*NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia) is one of the largest independent medical and clinical research institutes in Australia and an international leader in neurological research.*

*Diseases of the brain and nervous system pose the greatest health, economic and social burden of any disease group because they are chronic, debilitating and have no known cures.*

*Medical research is the cornerstone of efforts to advance the health and wellbeing of families and the community. Our dedicated scientists are focussed on transforming their research into significant and practical benefits for all patients.*

*While we hope you find this information useful, it is always important to discuss any questions about bipolar disorder or its treatment with your doctor or other health care provider.*