

# Administration of Electroconvulsive Therapy

Issues covered include:

- When ECT can be administered
- Application criteria for ECT and Emergency ECT orders
- Role of the Chief Psychiatrist (or Delegate)

For an explanation of all technical definitions and terms used in this module, please refer to the *Definitions of terms used in the [Mental Health Act 2015](#)*.

## Electroconvulsive Therapy Order

Electroconvulsive Therapy Order (ECT) may be administered for the following groups of people:

1. adults with decision-making capacity
2. adults without decision-making capacity
3. young people with decision-making capacity
4. young people without decision-making capacity.

**ALERT:** ECT must not be administered to a person who is under 12 years old.

### 1. Adult with decision-making capacity

ECT may be administered to an adult if they have decision-making capacity to consent to the administration of ECT, if the person:

- has given consent to the administration of ECT, and
- has not withdrawn the consent, either orally or in writing, and
- has not had ECT administered:
  - 9 or more times since the consent was given, or
  - if the consent was to the administration of ECT a stated number of times (less than 9), ~~that number of times.~~

### 2. Adult without decision-making capacity

ECT may be administered to an adult without decision-making capacity to consent to the administration of ECT:

- if the person has an advance consent direction (ACD) consenting to ECT, and
  - it is administered in accordance with the ACD, and
  - the person does not refuse or resist.

OR
- if ECT is administered in accordance with an ECT order or an emergency ECT which is in force in relation to the person, and
- either:
  - the person does not refuse or resist, or
  - a Psychiatric Treatment Order (PTO) or a Forensic Psychiatric Treatment Order (FPTO) is also in force in relation to the person.

Figure 1 *Administration of Electroconvulsive Therapy for an Adult* provides a visual representation of the steps to be considered when applying for an ECT or emergency ECT order for an adult.

### 3. Young person with decision-making capacity

ECT may be administered to a young person, who is at least 12 years old but under 18 years old, if they have decision-making capacity to consent to the administration of ECT.

- ECT may be administered:
  - for a 12 to 15 year old if an ECT order is in force in relation to the person, or
  - for a 16 or 17 year old if an ECT order or an emergency ECT order in force in relation to the person, and
- the person has given consent to the administration of ECT, and
- the person has not withdrawn the consent, either orally or in writing.

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### 4. Young person without decision-making capacity

ECT may be administered to a young person, who is at least 12 years old but under 18 years old, if the person does not have decision-making capacity to consent to the administration of ECT.

- ECT may be administered:
  - for a 12 to 15 year old if an ECT order is in force in relation to the person, or
  - for a 16 or 17 year old if an ECT order or an emergency ECT order in force in relation to the person, and
  - the person does not refuse or resist, or
  - a PTO or a FPTO is also in force in relation to the person.

Figure 2 *Administration of Electroconvulsive Therapy for a Young Person* provides a visual representation of the steps to be considered when applying for an ECT or emergency ECT order for a young person.

### Application for an ECT order

If the Chief Psychiatrist or a doctor believes on reasonable grounds that the ACAT could reasonably make an ECT order in relation to a person, the Chief Psychiatrist or doctor may apply to the ACAT for an ECT order:

- If the person is under 18 years old:
  - the application must be supported by the evidence of another doctor, and
  - the applicant or the other doctor (or both) must be a child and adolescent psychiatrist.

### When can the ACAT make an ECT order?

The ACAT may make an ECT order for a person who is at least 12 years old if satisfied that:

- The person has a mental illness, and
- The person does not have decision-making capacity to consent to the administration of ECT, and

- the person does not have an ACD refusing consent to ECT, and
- the administration of ECT is likely to result in substantial benefit to the person, and
- Either:
  - all other reasonable forms of treatment available have been tried but have not been successful, or
  - the treatment is the most appropriate treatment reasonably available.

The ACAT may make an ECT order for a person who is at least 12 years old but under 18 years old if satisfied that:

- The person has a mental illness, and
- The person has decision-making capacity to consent to the administration of ECT, and
- The person consents to the administration of ECT, and
- The administration of ECT is likely to result in substantial benefit to the person.

### Content of ECT order

An ECT order states:

- Why the ACAT is satisfied that an ECT Order is appropriate, and
- The maximum number of times ECT may be administered to the person under the order. This may be no more than 9 times, or if the person has an ACD, not be more than the maximum number of times stated in the direction.

### Application for emergency ECT order

If the Chief Psychiatrist and a doctor believe on reasonable grounds that the ACAT could reasonably make an emergency ECT order in relation to a person, the Chief Psychiatrist and doctor may jointly apply to the ACAT for

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an emergency ECT order in relation to the person.

The application must be accompanied by an application for an ECT order in relation to the person.

### When can the ACAT make an emergency ECT order?

The ACAT may make an emergency ECT order for a person who is at least 16 years old if satisfied that:

- The person has a mental illness, and
- The person does not have decision-making capacity to consent to the administration of ECT, and
- The person does not have an ACD refusing consent to ECT, and
- the administration of ECT is necessary to:
  - save the person's life, or
  - prevent the likely onset of a risk to the person's life within 3 days, and
  - either:
    - all other reasonable forms of treatment available have been tried but have not been successful, or
    - the treatment is the most appropriate treatment reasonably available.

The ACAT may make an ECT order for a person who is at least 16 years old if satisfied that:

- The person has a mental illness, and
- The person has decision-making capacity to consent to the administration of ECT, and
- The person consents to the administration of ECT, and
- The administration of ECT is necessary to:

- save the person's life, or
- prevent the likely onset of a risk to the person's life within 3 days, and
- All other reasonable forms of treatment available have been tried but have not been successful, or
- The treatment is the most appropriate treatment reasonably available.

### Content of emergency ECT order

An Emergency ECT Order states the number of times that ECT may be administered to the person (not more than 3) and when the order expires. This is not more than 7 days after the order is given.

**ALERT:** If an emergency ECT order is in force in relation to a person and the ACAT makes an ECT order in relation to the person, the emergency ECT order ceases to be in force.

### Records of ECT

A doctor who administers ECT must keep a record of the administration of the ECT, including:

- Whether the administration was in accordance with an order of the ACAT, and
- If the person gave consent for ECT.

The doctor must give the record to the person in charge of the facility where the therapy was administered.

The person in charge of the facility must keep a record of ECT given for at least 5 years.

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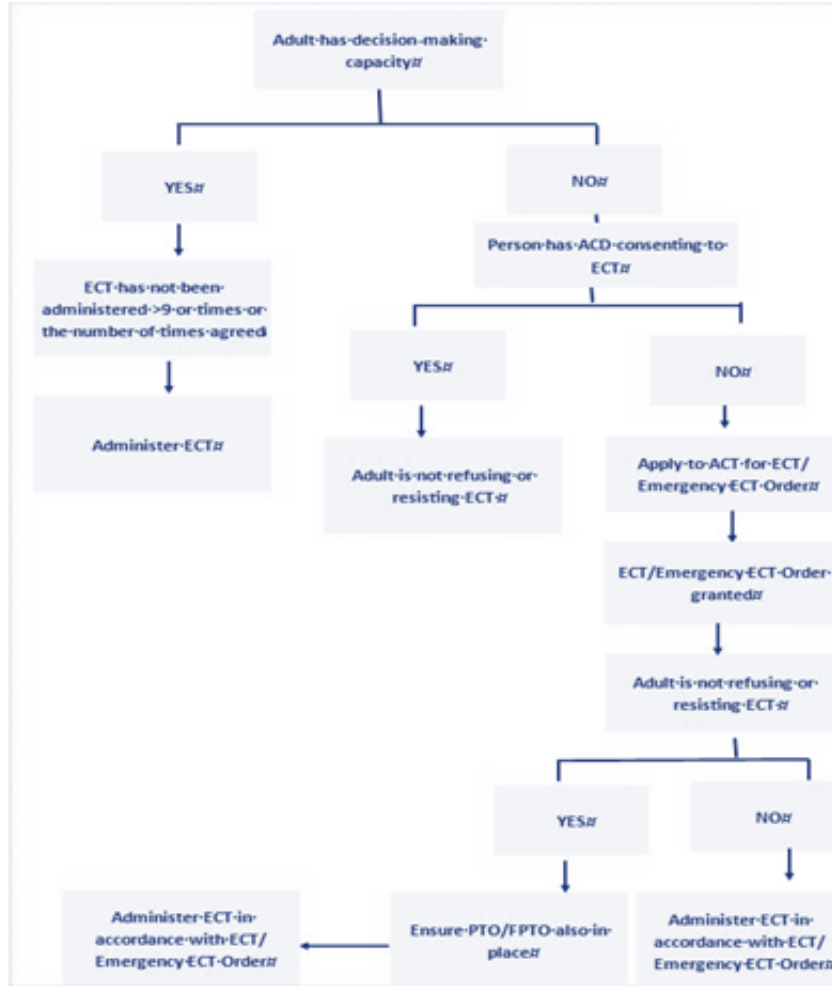


Figure 1 Administration of Electroconvulsive Therapy for an Adult

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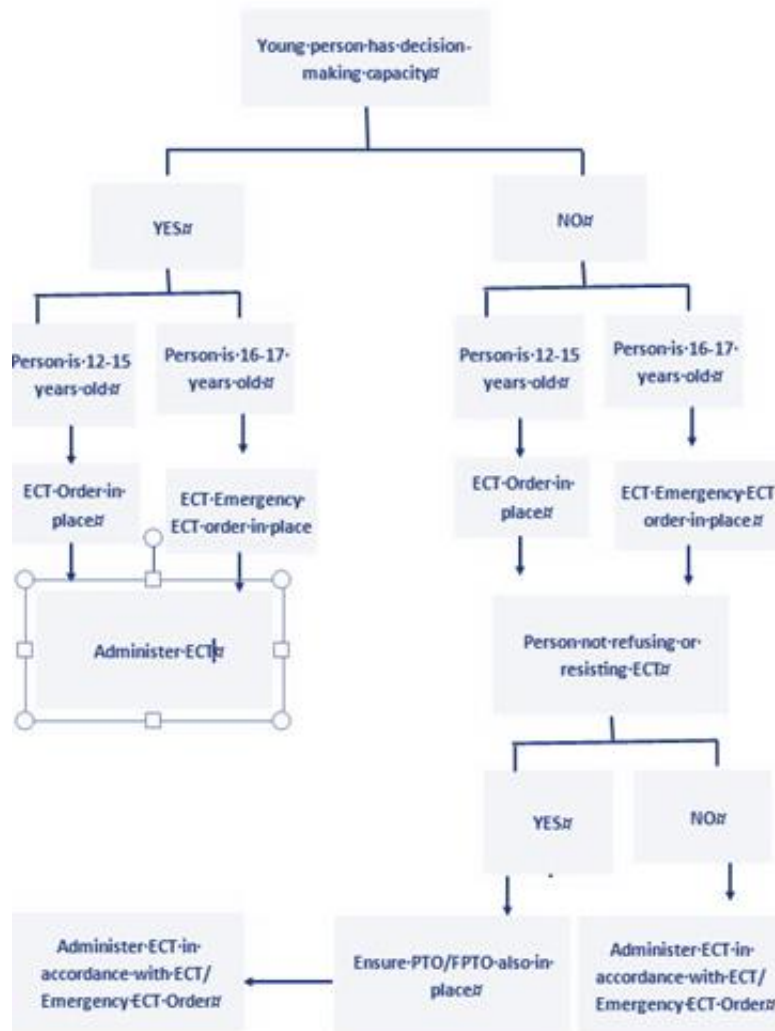


Figure 2 Administration of Electroconvulsive Therapy for a Young Person