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Shock Therapy May Relieve Depression

But can have side effects

(HealthScoutNews) -- Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) sometimes is used to treat patients with severe depression -- particularly when it does not respond to antidepressant medications.

While it is not known precisely how ECT works, it is believed to cause the brain to release chemicals -- neurotransmitters -- that have the effect of making a person calmer and better able to deal with life.

ECT is done, explains the American Academy of Family Physicians, while you are anesthetized and under the effect of a muscle-relaxing medication. Electric shocks lasting a second or two then are applied to your brain, which has a brief seizure. You're allowed to wake up a few minutes later. Then, after a brief period in a recovery room, you are allowed to either go back to your hospital room or go home, as appropriate.

But side effects can include short-term memory loss, nausea, muscle aches, headaches, or even a change in your blood pressure or heart rhythm. You also might suffer longer-term memory problems. Your follow-up care may include appropriate medications for any of these symptoms.

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Last modified: Tue Oct 15 2002