NHS
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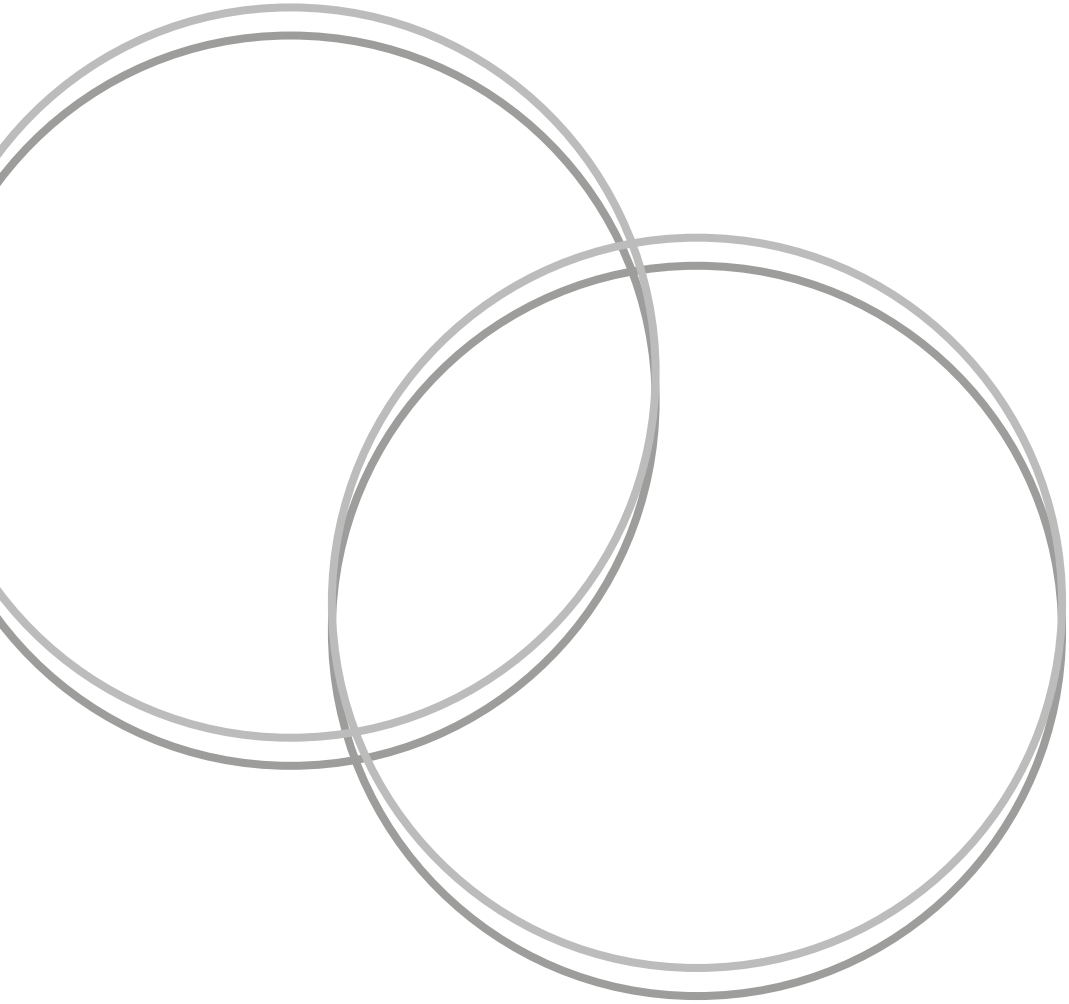
Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy

Information for patients



What is Shockwave Therapy?

Shockwave therapy (also known as extracorporeal shock wave therapy or ESWT) is a non-invasive treatment that uses high-energy sound waves directed through the skin to the area of injury or pain. It is still quite a new treatment and the exact way it works is not fully understood, but it may work by helping to stimulate blood flow, promote tissue repair, which in the long term may help reduce inflammation.

What to Expect During a Shockwave Therapy Session

A gel will be applied to the treatment area to help the shockwaves penetrate the skin more effectively. A handheld probe is then placed in the affected area to deliver the shockwave therapy. You are likely to feel some discomfort or a tapping sensation during the procedure. The intensity can be adjusted to suit your comfort level. Each treatment takes about 10 minutes.

The shockwave therapy unit looks like the one in the following image.

Why am I being offered shockwave therapy?

If you are offered shockwave therapy it is likely that you have already tried other treatments for your condition including physiotherapy and you are still experiencing pain. Depending on the condition you have you may also have already tried orthotics (inserts in your shoes), physiotherapy and changes in your activity level.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) approve the use of shockwave therapy as safe in Achilles tendinopathy, plantar fasciitis, greater trochanteric pain syndrome and lateral epicondylitis (tennis elbow).

What are the benefits of shockwave therapy?

It is a non-invasive treatment meaning no surgery or needles are involved. Most patients can return to normal activities immediately after treatment. The treatment has been shown to increase blood circulation and activity in the cells in the treated area which can stimulate the body's own healing process. In time this can lead to a reduction in pain.

How many sessions will I need?

You may need up to three sessions of shockwave therapy. If your pain has improved but is still troubling you then you can have another three sessions. We will contact you following your first three sessions to see whether you require any further treatment.

What are the side effects?

Shockwave therapy is generally considered safe with minimal risks. However, some potential side effects include:

- Mild discomfort or soreness in the treated area
- Redness or bruising (which usually resolves within a few days)
- Swelling
- Temporary increase in pain (rare)
- Calf aching or numbness in treatment for Achilles tendinopathy

These side effects are usually mild and go away on their own within a short period.

- Very rarely there is a risk of more serious damage to the structure being treated, for example risks of tear or rupture of the structure being treated.

What should I do after the treatment?

Most people can continue their usual activities following the shockwave treatment. It is important to continue with any exercises given by your physiotherapist whilst undergoing the shockwave treatment. We advise avoiding strenuous exercise or impact such as running in the first 48 hours following treatment. If you have had treatment to your plantar fascia or Achilles tendon you can wear your usual shoes after the treatment.

When should I expect to have an improvement in my pain?

Most patients begin to notice improvement after 2-3 sessions, but the full benefits may take 4-6 weeks to manifest. Results can vary based on the condition being treated and individual response.

Who Should Not Have Shockwave Therapy?

In some cases, such as if you have a significant tear of the structure being treated we may not recommend shockwave therapy.

Shockwave therapy may also not be suitable for individuals with the following conditions:

- Pregnancy
- Active cancer or tumours in the treatment area
- Severe vascular diseases or circulation issues
- Infections in the treatment area
- Corticosteroid therapy within the last 6 weeks
- Children (unless otherwise directed by a healthcare professional)
- Pacemakers or other implanted devices
- Joint replacements

What should I do if I am in pain after the shockwave therapy?

If you experience any soreness after treatment, applying ice to the treated area can help reduce discomfort. (Wrap the ice in a cloth or tea towel to avoid applying the ice directly on to the skin, and apply for a maximum of 20 minutes four times a day). You may also want to try over the counter painkillers (unless you have a medical reason not to). We suggest ***avoiding*** anti-inflammatory medication, such as naproxen and ibuprofen, in the days (up to a week) before and after your treatment as these may interfere with the healing process.

If you have concerns or are unsure about your symptoms please contact us

Oxsport telephone: **01865 737 457**

Or if it is out of hours call NHS 111 for advice. If you develop sudden severe pain please go to your local Emergency Department.

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Author: OxSport Team
November 2025
Review: November 2028
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information

Leaflet reference number: OMI 117207