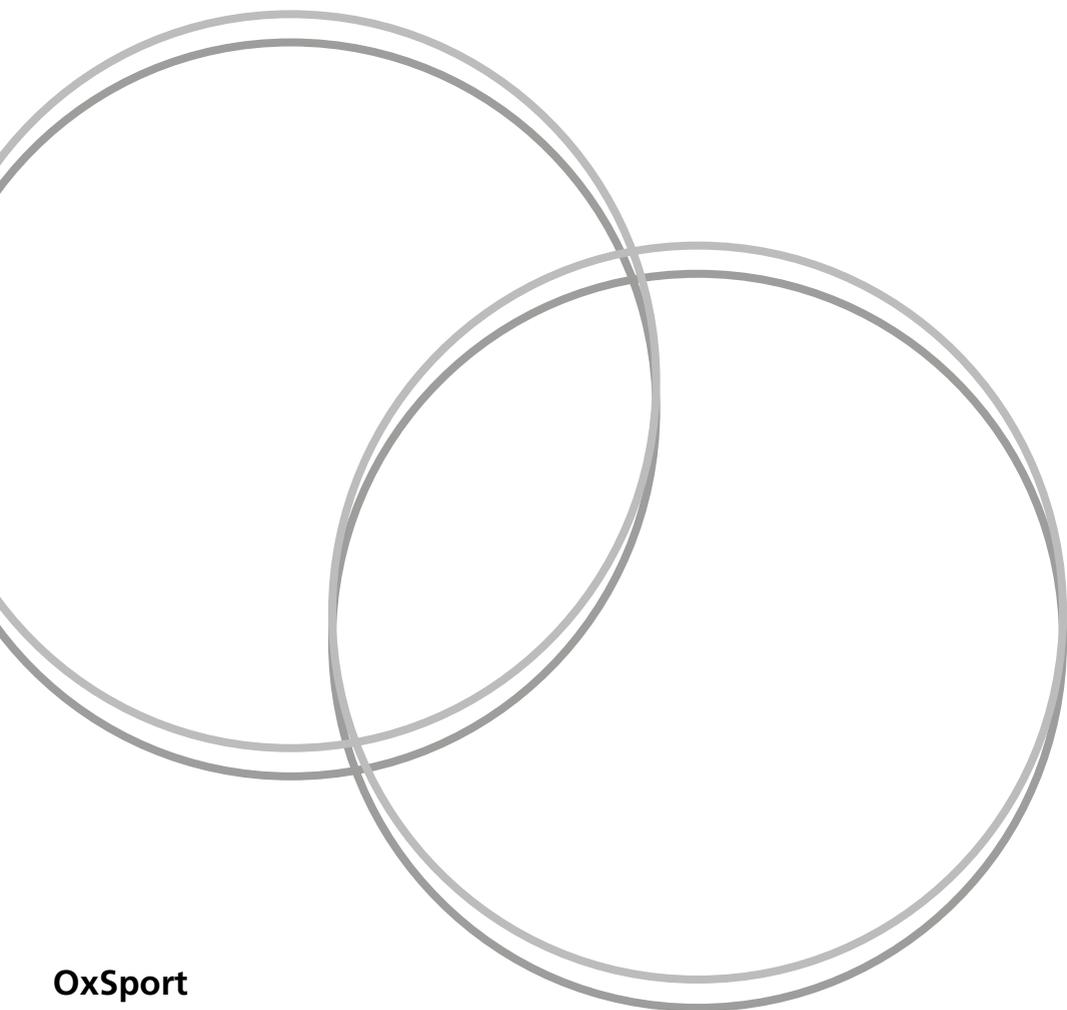


Extracorporeal shockwave therapy for Achilles tendinopathy

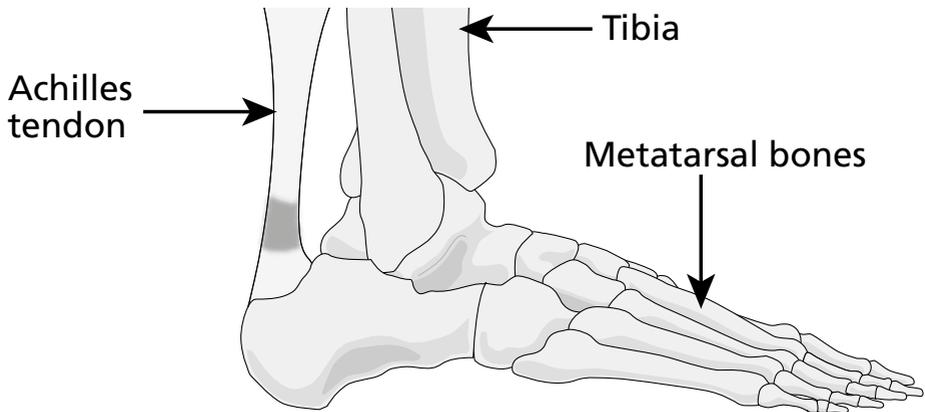
Information for patients



What is Achilles tendinopathy?

The cause of Achilles tendinopathy is still not completely understood, but we know tendinopathy occurs when a tendon is unable to adapt to the strain being placed upon it. This leads to repeated small amounts of damage within the tendon fibres, and results in the tendon trying to heal itself in response to the strain.

Sometimes you will hear this condition called Achilles tendinitis or tendinosis but these terms are used by people to mean the same thing as tendinopathy.



What is extracorporeal shockwave therapy?

Shockwave therapy uses mechanical (instead of electrical) high energy sound waves, which pass through the skin to the affected area.

This is still quite a new treatment and the exact way that it works is not fully understood. It is usually recommended when other treatment options have been unsuccessful.

Each treatment takes around 10 minutes. A gel will be applied to your skin over the area to be treated, and the shockwave therapy will then be delivered through a handheld probe. When the therapy is happening, you may hear a tapping noise and are likely to feel a little discomfort.

The shockwave therapy unit looks like this one.



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Why do I need shockwave therapy?

Achilles tendinopathy usually responds well to treatments such as stretches, orthotics (shoe inserts), changes in activity and physiotherapy. However, sometimes pain still continues. Shockwave therapy is one of the next treatment options available.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) consider this procedure to be safe.

What are the benefits of shockwave therapy?

This treatment has been shown to increase blood circulation and activity in the cells in the treatment area, which in turns speeds up the body's own healing process. The nerves can also be overstimulated by the shockwave, which leads to reduced pain sensation.

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.

After the first three sessions we will contact you to see if your pain has improved. If not, we can arrange for you to have up to an additional three sessions.

What are the side effects?

Shockwave therapy can be uncomfortable, but has been proven to be a safe treatment. Possible side effects include:

- pain during and for up to 24 hours after treatment
- skin reddening
- swelling around the heel area
- bruising around the site of treatment
- minor bleeding from the small blood vessels in the heel, leading to bruising
- calf aching and numbness
- a small risk of rupture to the Achilles tendon (very rare).

The majority of these symptoms, if they occur, should get better within a couple of days and normally within a week before the next treatment.

What should I do after the treatment?

You should be able to continue your usual activities following shockwave treatment. We would suggest avoiding any strenuous exercises or impact, such as running, for the first 48 hours. However, it is important to continue with the exercises given to you by the physiotherapist, such as stretching your Achilles tendon. Even if you have no pain we recommend that you avoid intensive activities that stress your Achilles tendon.

You can wear your usual shoes after treatment.

Where can I get further information?

Further information about shockwave therapy is available from the NICE website (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence):

Website: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg571

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

If you have any discomfort, you may want to take over the counter painkillers (unless you have a medical reason not to). Avoid taking anti-inflammatory medication, such as naproxen or ibuprofen, as this can interfere with the healing process.

If you are unsure about your symptoms or have concerns, please call us:

Foot and Ankle Team

Tel: **01865 737 875**

(Monday to Friday)

OxSport

Tel: **01865 737 457**

(Monday to Friday)

If you have concerns outside of normal working hours, telephone your out of hours GP or call NHS 111 (dial 111 free from landlines or mobiles).

If you develop sudden severe pain around your foot or ankle, please go to your local Emergency Department.

If you need an interpreter or would like this information leaflet in another format, such as Easy Read, large print, Braille, audio, electronically or another language, please speak to the department where you are being seen. You will find their contact details on your appointment letter.

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May 2019
Review: May 2022
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
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