

# Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy (ESWT)

Physiotherapy



**Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy (ESWT)** is an evidence-based treatment that consists of **low-pressure energy waves** passing through injured tissue to **increase blood flow** and **stimulate repair**. It also helps to **reduce pain**, allowing your body to **restart the healing process** alongside an appropriate **exercise programme**.

## What are shockwaves?

**Shockwave therapy** has been used in the medical field **since the 1980s**, starting with the **non-surgical treatment of kidney stones**. It was then developed to treat **many areas of the body** by delivering the **low energy pressure waves** into injured tissues such as **tendons and muscles**. Its mechanism provides a **pain-relieving effect**, **increases blood flow**, and stimulates the **body's natural healing process**.

## ESWT can be used to help:

- ➔ Plantar Fasciitis (Plantar heel pain)
- ➔ Tendinopathies
  - // Tennis Elbow
  - // Achilles Tendinopathy
  - // Greater Trochanteric Pain Syndrome (GTPS)
  - // Patella Tendinopathy

**Golfers elbow** isn't routinely indicated for ESWT but may be considered on an **individual basis** following a **shared decision-making process** with your physiotherapist.

## How successful is the treatment?

The full **benefits of treatment** are often not felt **until 12 weeks** following your sessions, although after two to three sessions, many people report a **notable pain reduction**. In chronic conditions alone, there is an **overall success rate** ranging from **60-80%** when other therapeutic treatments have been unsuccessful. These success rates are reliant on **completing the correct rehabilitation** alongside the treatment, which **your physiotherapist** will provide you with **guidance on**.



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## How many sessions are needed?

This will be **dependent on you individually** and the **condition being treated**. As a general guide you may expect around **three to four sessions**. Each session includes **approximately five to 10 minutes** of active treatment followed by **advice, education** and a **home exercise programme**. Your home exercise programme will **need to be continued** after ESWT treatment and is **extremely important** to allow you to get the **full benefits**.

## Considerations for your appointment:

- You should not have **non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)** **two weeks prior** to your first appointment or during your treatment.
- You may not be able to commence ESWT if you have received a **steroid injection within the last 12 weeks** depending on site of injection.
- If you commence any **antibiotics** prior to or during your treatment course, then please **inform your physiotherapist** so you can be screened accordingly.
- If you drive, it is **safe to do so** following your ESWT treatment.

## Is ESWT Painful?

You may experience **some discomfort** during the treatment although it should be **tolerable**. The energy levels used will be **adjusted according to your pain**. Following the treatment, you may find there is a **pain-relieving effect**, although it is also normal for your symptoms to **temporarily increase** for a **short period** after treatment too. It is advised that you **avoid any anti-inflammatory medication** throughout your treatment as this will **counteract** the mechanisms of the ESWT although you can take **other painkillers** if required.

## Is ESWT Safe?

ESWT is a **very safe treatment**, and you will be **screened against any risks** to ensure it is the right approach for you. It is also supported by the **National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)** and **International Society for Medical Shockwave Therapy (ISMST)** for use within our practice, **by our physiotherapists**, who are **specifically trained** to deliver this treatment.

If you have any **questions** about ESWT and your treatment, please discuss with **your physiotherapist** or contact the **Care Co-ordination Centre** on:

 **0300 131 0111**

 **provide.askus@nhs.net**

