

# Having shockwave therapy (ESWT) for soft tissue disorders in your foot/ankle

Orthopaedics

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Information for Patients

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## Introduction

You have been diagnosed as having Achilles tendinopathy or plantar fasciitis by a healthcare professional in the past. They have recommended Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy (ESWT). This treatment may help to reduce your pain if previous treatments, such as physiotherapy, weight loss, use of painkillers or rest have not. This leaflet explains more about the use of ESWT and includes information on the benefits, risks, and any alternative treatments to ESWT as well as what you can expect when you have treatment. If you have any further questions, please speak to the health professional caring for you.

## What is Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy (ESWT)?

Extracorporeal means outside the body. During treatment sound shockwaves are passed through the skin to the injured part of your foot or ankle using a special device. It works by stimulating cells within the area that is sore, this speeds up the healing process. As well as helping the healing process, ESWT seems to have a direct effect on the nerves and reduces pain.

ESWT is a treatment usually offered when symptoms have lasted for at least 3 to 6 months and have not responded to the other treatments

A course of ESWT treatment normally needs

- 1 treatment session a week, every week for 4 weeks
- treatment to be no more than 2 weeks apart
- a follow up appointment. This will be arranged for 8 weeks after the last session to see if this treatment has helped you.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

It is important that you continue to do the other treatments, such as stretching that were discussed with you before shock wave therapy was started. For example, stretches, taping, using certain footwear, reducing certain activities. Please find a link to leaflets on the back page. Some are available as paper copies if you cannot link to them.

## How does ESWT work?

It is still not known exactly how ESWT works, but it is thought that treatment causes inflammation and increased blood circulation in the area that is being treated. This speeds up the body's own healing processes. The shockwaves also affect the nerves, which can reduce painful sensations.

## What are Achilles tendinopathy and plantar fasciitis ?

The Achilles tendon attaches your calf muscle to your heel bone. Achilles tendinopathy causes pain, swelling, stiffness and weakness. It is thought to be caused by repeated small injuries to the tendon that do not heal, and build up over time.

Plantar fasciitis is inflammation of the plantar fascia. This is a thick fibrous band of tissue at the bottom of your foot that lies between your toes and your heel. Repeated small injuries to the plantar fascia are believed to be the cause of the inflammation.

## What happens during the treatment?

- The treatment will be given at one of our community Hospitals in the Outpatient department.
- The health professional will examine your foot /ankle.
- They will ask you a number of questions to ensure that ESWT is appropriate for you.
- We will discuss what the treatment will involve including any possible problems it may cause and if you are happy to go ahead treatment will begin.
- Treatment takes about 5 minutes for each session.
- You will be asked to lie on your front with your legs supported by a pillow.
- The health professional will examine your foot or ankle and confirm the most painful area. We will ensure you are as comfortable as possible throughout the treatment.
- A gel is applied to the skin before giving the treatment. ESWT is non-invasive (no break to the skin). It involves mechanical shockwaves being passed through the skin to the sore area using a hand-held probe. The shockwaves are not electrical but are low energy sound waves that can be heard.
- Most patients do have some pain or discomfort during the procedure. You will be asked how much pain you are having during the treatment, and we will attempt to adjust the treatment to help manage this.
- ESWT is a safe treatment showing good results; however, it works best when combined with other treatments such as stretching. The person treating you will discuss these other treatments with you .

## What can you expect after the ESWT?

You may have a reduced level of pain, or no pain at all, straight away after the ESWT treatment, but pain may occur a few hours later. This usually lasts for a couple of days, but in rare cases can last longer.

Many patients will have an improvement in symptoms almost straight away; others take several weeks to respond. You should be able to continue your usual activities after the ESWT treatment. However, do not do anything you would not normally do. We advise that you avoid activities that make you work hard or cause pain to the affected / treated area for 48 hours after the ESWT treatment. This may include running, jumping and hopping. This can be slightly different for everyone; your health professional will give you advice that is right for you. After the course of treatment, you will be reviewed to see how you have responded to the treatment.

## What to do if you are in pain after the ESWT treatment

If necessary, you may use painkillers that you can buy from a chemist (unless you have a medical reason not to) or pain killers prescribed by your doctor.

Do not

- use ice on the treated area,
- take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines (for example, ibuprofen or naproxen) as these may reduce the healing effect of ESWT.

If you have any concerns after the ESWT treatment, please contact the hospital where you had the treatment to speak to one of the team caring for you (numbers at the back of this leaflet) for advice during normal working hours. Out of hours, please contact your GP or NHS 111 or go to your local Out of Hours if it is more urgent. If you have sudden onset of pain to the area or any loss of function, please go to your nearest Emergency Department.

## What are the risks?

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has advised that this treatment is safe. However, not everyone can have this treatment and it is unclear how well it works.

**You are not allowed ESWT if any of the following list apply to you:**

- Allergy to gels used when having an ultrasound scan
- Tendon rupture/ fascial tear
- Under 18 years of age
- Haemophilia/ clotting disorder/ risk of haemorrhage
- Unstable heart condition such as chest pain, blood pressure that is too high
- Taking a certain type of antibiotic known as fluoroquinolones (ciprofloxacin, Gemifloxacin, levofloxacin, moxifloxacin, norfloxacin, ofloxacin)

- Inherited brittle bone disease (osteogenesis imperfecta)
- You take warfarin
- You have a fracture near the site to be treated

**Treatment will not be given if you:**

- are pregnant/ trying to conceive
- have electronic implants – (pacemaker/ cardiac device) in the area to be treated
- have had recent radiotherapy in the area to be treated
- have cancer in the area to be treated
- have a blood clot in the area to be treated
- have infection in the area to be treated
- have severely impaired circulation
- have severe inflammation in the treatment area

**You may not be allowed to have this treatment if you have one of the following conditions:**

- Taking anticoagulant medication, for example, rivaroxaban
- Taking anti-platelet medication, for example, aspirin, clopidogrel
- You have a joint replacement near the treatment area
- You have an inflammatory disease such a rheumatoid arthritis (treatment will not be given during a flare up)
- Previous Achilles tendon rupture (until it is confirmed that it is fully healed)
- Increased sensitivity over the area to be treated. If the area is still sore after previous treatment, this will need to settle before starting the next treatment
- Marked reduction in sensation to the treatment area, for example, neuropathy linked with having diabetes
- You have epilepsy. We need to ensure that this is managed well and stable
- Steroid injection to the area within the last 3 months

**What are the potential side effects of ESWT?**

- Bruising
- Pain
- Local swelling
- Skin reddening

- Numbness or altered sensation
- Sores to the skin
- Damage to the tendon or plantar fascia

These side effects should resolve over the next week leading to your next treatment. There is a small risk of tendon rupture or ligament rupture and damage to the soft tissue. Studies have shown between 5 to 7 out of 10 patients have found ESWT to be effective.

## **Giving consent (permission)**

We want to involve you in decisions about your care and treatment. This will include a discussion with the healthcare professional about all your treatment options available, including ESWT, with the risks and benefits of all options explained in detail.

If you decide to proceed with ESWT, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This confirms that you understand the alternatives treatment options (including doing nothing) and the benefits of ESWT, and that you understand the potential risks involved with the treatment.

If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

## **Who will do the treatment?**

The therapy will be given by a healthcare professional - usually a podiatrist or physiotherapist who has done the training.

## **Will it hurt?**

Most patients feel some pain or discomfort during the procedure. This should not be great and we will adjust the treatment to try to manage this.

## **Stopping treatment**

You can stop treatment at any time. However, we do recommend that you complete the planned treatment course, as some effects are temporary and need repeated session to have a long-term impact.

## **What are the other treatment options?**

ESWT is a treatment option if other treatments have not helped.

If ESWT does not help you will be referred back to your GP or Consultant to talk about any further treatments that may help. These treatments may include physiotherapy or podiatry. In some circumstances, there are surgical options available, this would need to be discussed with a member of the Consultant's team.

## Further information

### NICE Extracorporeal shockwave therapy for refractory plantar fasciitis 2009

[www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg311](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg311)

### NICE Plantar Fasciitis ESWT Patient Information leaflet

[www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg311/resources/treating-chronicplantarfasciitis-using-shockwave-therapy-pdf-312696253](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg311/resources/treating-chronicplantarfasciitis-using-shockwave-therapy-pdf-312696253)

### NICE Extracorporeal shockwave therapy for Achilles Tendinopathy

[www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg571](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg571)

### NICE Achilles Tendinopathy ESWT Patient information leaflet

[www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg571/resources/extracorporealshockwavetherapy-for-achilles-tendinopathy-pdf-3541876757701](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg571/resources/extracorporealshockwavetherapy-for-achilles-tendinopathy-pdf-3541876757701)



1. QR code for exercises to help with plantar fascia pain
2. QR code to link to the MSK app which has videos showing exercises to help painful Achilles tendinopathy



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## Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the team where you had treatment (Mon to Fri, 8:30am to 4:30pm)

### Melton Mowbray Hospital:

Main reception: 01664 854800

### Leicester General Hospital

0116 2584092/ 4070

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

Previous reference:

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)