

# 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 other treatments like physiotherapy, weight loss, use of painkillers or rest have not worked.

## What is Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy (ESWT)?

Extracorporeal means outside the body. The treatment is given outside the body. During treatment we will pass sound shockwaves through the skin to the injured part of your foot or ankle. We do this using a special device. The shockwaves stimulate cells in the area that is sore. This speeds up the healing process. ESWT seems to have a direct effect on the nerves and reduces pain.

We offer ESWT as treatment 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. We arrange this for 8 weeks after the last session to see if this treatment has helped you.

It is important that you continue to do the other treatments, such as stretching that we talked about 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.

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

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

## How does ESWT work?

It is still not known exactly how ESWT works. 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 happens when the thick fibrous band of tissue at the bottom of your foot (the plantar fascia) becomes irritated where it inserts into the heel. This may be because of repeated small injuries to the plantar fascia that do not fully heal.

## What happens during the treatment?

1. The treatment will be given at one of our community Hospitals in the Outpatient department.
2. The health professional will examine your foot /ankle.
3. They will ask you a number of questions to make sure that ESWT is right for you.
4. We will talk about what the treatment will involve including any possible problems it may cause and if you are happy to go ahead treatment will begin.
5. Treatment takes about 5 minutes for each session.
6. You may be asked to lie on your front with your legs supported by a pillow.
7. The health professional will examine your foot or ankle and confirm the most painful area. We will make sure you are as comfortable as possible throughout the treatment.
8. We will put a gel on 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.
9. Most patients do have some pain or discomfort during the procedure. You will be asked how much pain you are having during the treatment. We will try to adjust the treatment to help manage this.

ESWT is a safe treatment showing good results. It works best when combined with other treatments such as stretching. The person treating you will talk with you about 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,. You may feel pain a few hours later. This often 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 (2 days) 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, we will review you to see how you have responded to the treatment.

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

You may use painkillers if need. You can buy them from a chemist (unless you have a medical reason not to) or pain killers prescribed by your doctor.

Do not:

- Do not use ice on the treated area.
- Do not 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 may not be 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
- You take oral steroids

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

- are pregnant/ trying to have a baby (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, 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 - during or after the treatment
- headache
- local swelling
- skin reddening
- numbness or altered sensation
- sores to the skin
- damage to the tendon or plantar fascia, including rupture

These side effects should get better 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 talk 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 have ESWT, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This confirms that you understand:

- the alternatives treatment options (including doing nothing)
- the benefits of ESWT
- 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, often 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.

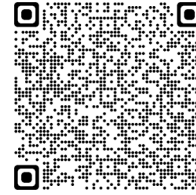
If ESWT does not help you will be referred back to your GP or Consultant to talk about any further treatments that may help. These treatments may include physiotherapy or podiatry. In some circumstances, there are surgical options available. This would need to be talked about with a member of the Consultant's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



## More 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/extracorporeals Shockwavetherapy-for-achilles-tendinopathy-pdf-3541876757701](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg571/resources/extracorporeals Shockwavetherapy-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 (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm)

- Melton Mowbray Hospital: **01664 854 800**
- Rutland Memorial Hospital: **01572 772 027**

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

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

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