



Oxford Circus  
Physiotherapy

# Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy (ESWT)



Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy (ESWT) is a non-invasive treatment in which acoustic sound waves are sent through the skin to the affected area.

It is purely a mechanical wave not an electrical one.

### **How does ESWT help with repair or injuries?**

ESWT sends sound waves into the tissue, this initiates a pro inflammatory response in the affected tissue that is being treated. The body responds by increasing the blood circulation and metabolism in the affected area which accelerates the body's own healing processes. The shock waves can break down injured tissues and calcifications. As a result of cellular tissue micro-trauma, it can provide a temporary analgesic effect on afferent nerves providing immediate pain relief, known as 'hyper-stimulation anaesthesia'.

### **FAQ For Patients:**

#### **Will Shock Wave Therapy help me?**

Shockwave therapy stimulates and supports the body's self-healing mechanisms. ESWT is a non-invasive treatment modality - there are no medications such as cortisone or surgery involved. There are no major safety concerns associated with ESWT however we have noted contraindications to the treatment below. It is common to have some immediate pain relief and studies have shown positive outcomes in approximately 70% of cases.

We do advise that the patient should seek appropriate Physiotherapy prior to ESWT as it should also be used alongside traditional Physiotherapy techniques. Research has shown that appropriate strengthening protocols and stretching protocols in combination with ESWT can be more beneficial to overall recovery of a condition.

### **Does the treatment hurt?**

It is an uncomfortable procedure, this is also dependent on the level of pain you are already experiencing. However the treatment only lasts 5 minutes, so most patients are able to tolerate this discomfort. The therapist can adjust the intensity depending on the patient's needs.

### **How many treatment sessions will be required?**

It does vary, however the treatment is cumulative and research shows that a minimum of 3 treatments are required to be effective. In general the recommendation is between 3-6 treatment sessions. Very often you will feel relief after the first session.

### **How often will I require treatment?**

Generally you will require 3-6 sessions in close succession 3-10 days apart depending on the patient's tolerance and how the tissue responds to the treatment.

### **Will I feel any pain after the treatment?**

ESWT is uncomfortable as the treatment is promoting inflammation in an injured tissue. Most patients feel relief post ESWT and then within a few hours following ESWT there is tenderness in the area treated. It should be tolerable and not limit your day to day activities.

### Are there any restrictions to treatment?

Following ESWT patients should avoid physical activity involving the treated area for around 48 hours. Prior to treatment we ask patients to avoid taking anti-inflammatory medication (NSAIDs) for 14 days before commencement of treatment. Following treatment patients are asked to avoid the use of anti-inflammatory medications such as Ibuprofen/Voltarol or ICE on the treated area as both will affect the body's inflammatory and healing process stimulated by the shock wave treatment.

The long term effects of ESWT are normally seen after 3 months.

### Contraindications to Treatment (what we cant do)

- Treatment over air filled tissue (lung, gut)
- Treatment of pre-rupture tendons
- Treatment of pregnant women
- Treatment of patients under 18 (apart from Osgood Schlatters)
- Treatment of patient with clotting disorders (including thrombosis) or taking anticoagulant/anti platelet medications
- Treatment of patients treated with cortisone (3 months from treatment)
- Presence of a cardiac pacemaker
- Treatment over or near bone growth centres until bone growth is complete
- Malignancy is known to be present in or near the treatment area
- Treatment site has open wounds, skin rashes, swollen, inflamed, or infected areas
- Over ischemic tissues in individuals with vascular disease
- Allergy to ultrasound gel / caster oil

Please contact us should you have any further questions.



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