The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt
Orthopaedic Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

Information for patients

Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy (ESWT)

Foot and Ankle

This leaflet explains about the use of Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy (ESWT) including the benefits, risks and what you can expect from your treatment.

What is ESWT?

ESWT or Shockwave is the name given to a treatment that involves shockwaves being passed through the skin to the injured part of the body using a special device.

Extracorporeal means outside the body. The shockwaves are audible, low energy sound waves that are mechanical, not electrical. They work by increasing blood flow to the injured area and speed up the body's healing response.

ESWT has been reviewed by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) in the UK.

Why should I have ESWT and what does it involve?

ESWT may be offered to patients who have had a painful tendon for many months that hasn't responded to other treatments or physiotherapy.

The treatment should help reduce your pain so you can return to your normal activities and carry out exercises and rehabilitation more easily.

We offer three sessions of ESWT, within one month, but usually at weekly intervals.

Each session takes 5-10 minutes. The painful area is located through palpation (touch) and gel is applied to a hand held device to transmit of the shockwaves to the injured area.

Shockwave uses a series of high energy pneumatic (compressed air) shockwaves delivered to the problem area via a hand piece.

Conditions commonly treated with ESWT

- Plantar fasciopathy (fasciitis)
- Achilles Tendinopathy (tendinitis)
- Patellar tendinopathy (tendinitis)
- Hamstring tendinopathy
- Trochanteric bursitis (gluteal tendinopathy/greater trochanteric pain syndrome)
- Calcific rotator cuff tendinitis
- Lateral epiconylitis (tennis elbow)

What does it do and how does it work?

Passing shockwave through the surface of the skin initiates an inflammatory response to the injured tissue. This then prompts the body to respond naturally by increasing blood circulation and therefore metabolism in the injured tissue. This speeds up the body's natural healing response by increasing cell regeneration and enhancing tissue repair.

The benefit of shockwave eliminates the need for surgery or injections.

What are the risks and possible side effects?

You may experience some pain or discomfort during the treatment, but it should not be an intolerable level. ESWT side effects are rare, however you may experience mild discomfort, reddening of the skin or bruising in the area for a short time following the treatment.

In addition, this treatment might not work for you and your symptoms might remain the same. There's a very small risk it might make your pain worse, rupture your tendon, or cause soft tissue damage.

However, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) have deemed this procedure to be safe.

Who do I contact if I am worried or have questions?

Jane Leah or Rohan Lester (Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioners on the Foot and Ankle help line: **01691 404202** leaving a message with your name, hospital number and contact number.

You will be asked to complete a consent form but ESWT should not be administered in the following cases:

- Pregnancy
- Patients with a cardiac pacemaker/device
- Over lung tissue/cardiac stents or valves
- Those on active treatment for Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Within 12 weeks of a cortisone injection to the injured area to be treated
- Focal infections
- Patients currently undergoing treatment for cancer or history of bone cancer
- If you are taking anti-coagulants (Blood thinning drugs)
- Neuropathy

These will be discussed with you by your healthcare professional when the treatment is offered.

What to expect during treatment

A course of 3 treatments is recommended over one month, usually at weekly intervals to allow the tissue reaction to subside before the next treatment is delivered.

2500 shocks are delivered during the session taking between 5-10 minutes. Gel is applied to the area before the ESWT is carried out.

On starting the treatment, you will hear a series of shocks and it will feel like someone is tapping firmly on the site being treated. If this becomes too uncomfortable, you should notify your treating therapist as the intensity of treatment can be reduced or the treatment head repositioned.

Considerations after ESWT treatment

Anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen should not be used 24 hours after receiving the treatment as they may decrease the effectiveness of the treatment.

You may continue with your usual activities including work and driving. However, we advise avoiding strenuous pain provoking- exercise for 48 hours after ESWT. You can discuss this with your therapist who will advise you on modifying your activity level.

You may feel pain relief from the treatment straight away, but the long-term results are normally felt after 3 months. How you feel straight away and between treatment sessions is not a predictor to how you will feel at 3 months.

You will receive an outpatient appointment and a follow up questionnaire 12 weeks after your final ESWT treatment to assess the effectiveness of your ESWT treatment.

If you have any questions or concerns before or after your ESWT treatment, then please contact us on the Foot and Ankle team helpline on 01691 404202.

Other advice and useful resources

ESWT may work better when combined with specific rehabilitation exercises. If you have been prescribed strengthening and stretching exercises please continue with these during and after the treatment until your 12 week follow up appointment.

There are NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) recommendations for patients undertaking ESWT – see the NICE website www.nice.org.uk

Notes:

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If you require a special edition of this leaflet

This leaflet is available in large print. Arrangements can also be made on request for it to be explained in your preferred language. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) email: rjah.pals.office@nhs.net

Feedback

Tell us what you think of our patient information leaflet. Please send your comments to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) email: rjah.pals.office@nhs.net

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