

Shockwave Therapy



Exploring the what, why and how with STRIVE Sport & Exercise Medicine



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What is shockwave therapy?

Shockwave works by emitting intense compressed air pressure waves. During treatment a trained clinician holds a shockwave device next to the skin. The pressure waves penetrate the tissue, helping to break down scar tissue, increase blood circulation and create an inflammatory response that:

- stimulates the body's ability to self-heal
- encourages damaged tissue to regenerate
- restores mobility
- speeds up recovery times
- reduces acute or chronic pain



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What injuries can be treated with shockwave, and how effective is it?

Shockwave therapy is used to reduce pain and promote healing of tendinopathies and many other sports injuries. There are multiple studies reporting very good results using shockwave therapy together with a comprehensive rehabilitation and exercise program. Treated conditions and estimated success rates include:

- 83% improvement for calcific tendonitis of the shoulder
- 77% improvement for tennis elbow
- 76% improvement for Achilles tendinopathy
- 84% improvement for plantar fasciitis
- 80% improvement for tennis and golfer's elbow
- 88% improvement for patellar tendonitis (jumper's knee)
- 80% improvement for trigger points

It is important for patients to know that benefit of shockwave therapy may not be apparent immediately, but should increase over time as the injured tissues heal. This can take up to 12 weeks.



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How long is treatment, and is it painful?

A single treatment usually takes between 4-5 minutes. Depending on the injury, a patient will usually receive three to five treatments over a period of several weeks.

Most patients report some discomfort during shockwave therapy. The amount of discomfort depends in part on the person, the injury, and whether the damaged tissues are close to a bone. Treatments delivered closer to a bone are generally more uncomfortable.



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What are the side effects, and when can I return to activity?

Most side effects are at the area of treatment. These include: pain at the application site, skin redness, bruising, hematoma formation, nerve irritation/tingling and superficial swelling. Systemic side effects may include a headache.

Patients may return to modified activity within 24 hours of a treatment, focusing on eliminating the aggravating movements to allow healing and improved function. This is in addition to exercises specified by the rehabilitation clinician. Your treating clinician will provide specific post-treatment instructions based on your condition and sport/activity.