

# What is Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy (EST)?

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## What is shockwave therapy?

Chronic pain is often caused by degeneration, stiffening, calcification, or strain on the muscles or tendons.

Extracorporeal (outside the body) Shockwave (focused shockwave energy) Therapy (treatment) is a non-invasive technique designed to treat these causes of chronic pain without the need for injections, medication or surgery.

## Why do I need EST?

Usually to treat chronic tendon problems.

## Who has made the decision?

Your GP, specialist or physiotherapist has referred you for treatment.

## What are the alternatives?

The alternatives include: do nothing, guided injection of local anaesthetic/steroid, physiotherapy or pain relief medication.

## Who will be performing the EST?

A Radiologist or, Radiographer.

## Where will it take place?

In the Medical Imaging Department.

## How do I prepare for an EST?

You will be sent an appointment. If you are taking any medication to thin your blood, such as Warfarin, or may be pregnant let us know before attending your first procedure. You may be asked to put on a hospital gown, otherwise no preparation is necessary.

## What actually happens during EST?

A probe is passed over the site of your symptoms and shock waves are directed to the area affected or calcified. The therapy initiates a healing process at the site of pain. In other words, provides improved blood circulation to encourage tissue repair. It may also help to dissolve calcium deposits that may be contributing to your pain.

## Will it hurt?

There may be some local discomfort.

## How long will it take?

Please allow half an hour for your appointment so that the treatment can be discussed with you beforehand. The procedure itself is relatively quick, at only a few minutes long.

## How is the procedure carried out?

The Radiologist/Radiographer will locate the pain by palpation (with your assistance) or by using ultrasound guidance. The treatment area is then marked and a gel is applied. If the treatment is being performed by a radiographer they will ask you to complete a consent to treatment form confirming the agreed area to be treated. The treatment is delivered via a hand-piece which is placed on the skin surface for the length of the procedure. This is normally no longer than five to ten minutes.

As shockwaves are used, expect some noise during the treatment.

## What problems can occur after the procedure?

Any adverse reaction to this procedure is rare. Reported complications include bruising, pain, and localised skin reddening.

## What happens after the procedure?

Depending on your condition, three sessions are required to complete the treatment. These are carried out a minimum of a week apart.

Although you may feel some improvement during the treatment process, healing normally occurs six weeks afterwards although you may not notice real relief and benefits for up to 3 months. Sometimes for the first one to two days after treatment some discomfort can be expected. This should pass within the week. There is no need to alter your day to day activities.

## Finally

If you find reading this leaflet difficult or you do not understand what it means for you, please call **01392 402336**, selecting option **1**, then option **6**, and we can talk it through or alternatively you can email us **[rduh.radiologyappointments@nhs.net](mailto:rduh.radiologyappointments@nhs.net)**.

*Some of your questions should have been answered by this leaflet, but remember that this is only a starting point for discussion about your treatment with the doctors looking after you. Make sure you are satisfied that you have received enough information about the procedure, before you sign the consent form. As per the NICE guidelines repeat courses of EST are not provided.*

Please note if you have had a steroid injection within the past 12 weeks, we will not be able to carry out the shockwave therapy. Please contact us on **01392 402336, option 1, option 6**.

## How to get to the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital at Wonford

**Please refer to the enclosed "Welcome to the Medical Imaging Department" leaflet or use the Trusts website for the latest information:**

Please refer to the enclosed "Welcome to the Medical Imaging Department" leaflet or use the Trusts website for the latest information.  
**[www.royaldevon.nhs.uk/our-sites](http://www.royaldevon.nhs.uk/our-sites)**

For more information on the Medical Imaging Department, please visit our website:  
**[www.royaldevon.nhs.uk/services/radiology-x-ray-and-medical-imaging](http://www.royaldevon.nhs.uk/services/radiology-x-ray-and-medical-imaging)**

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