

## Treating Tennis Elbow: Shock and Relief



If you have suffered the pain and frustration of recurrent tennis elbow, looking for a permanent solution is appropriate. Unfortunately, in the past, too often the quick or easy fix was not satisfactory, and even the well-performed rehabilitation program did not always resolve the condition. For these people, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's 2003 approval of a revolutionary treatment option, extracorporeal shockwave treatment (ESWT) may provide an option.

While still considered “experimental” by some physicians and insurance carriers, ESWT has been used for years in Europe with great success. The treatment takes around 20 minutes, usually under a light local anesthesia, and **involves using sound waves to actually cause slight damage to the tissues, which promotes a healing response, increases blood flow and curbs inflammation.** As an “extracorporeal,” or “outside the body” treatment, this procedure eliminates the risks and longer recovery period associated with invasive surgery.

There are actually two types of ESWT available for tennis elbow in the United States: high energy and low energy. The high-energy procedure delivers electrohydraulic high-energy shock waves to the affected area, forcing the body to repair the tendon by creating new tissue while also affecting pain receptors. Low-energy ESWT only affects the pain receptors and is more uncomfortable for the patient because no local anesthetic can be used.

**A growing number of patients suffering from certain conditions, including tennis elbow, have found significant relief from this low-risk procedure.** It may be a worthwhile option for those who have suffered from tennis elbow with little or no improvement from more conservative treatments. However, if you are thinking about trying ESWT, make sure to talk to your insurance company first—many carriers do not cover this treatment, and it can be expensive due to the equipment necessary for the procedure.

After the procedure, experts recommend that you take it easy for four weeks because most patients will experience bruising, swelling and temporary numbness. Complete healing may take as long as 12 weeks. Physical therapy is essential during this time to help with the transition back to your normal lifestyle. If you are suffering from tennis elbow, visit us to discuss your options (especially to ensure a well-designed rehabilitation sequence has been followed) including the possible benefits of this procedure and how we can help with your recovery.