Tired of Lingering Tendon Pain?
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LifeMotion® Physical Therapy

Orthopedic | Pelvic Health | Balance

Tired of Lingering Tendon Pain? Shockwave Therapy May Be the Answer

You've taken breaks, modified exercise, iced and compressed, elevated and mobilized, yet your pain keeps persisting. You're exhausted and frustrated. You have stopped exercising altogether and you are no longer doing the things you love. You suffer from chronic tendon pain that just doesn't seem to fully resolve.

Many people with chronic tendon conditions in the elbow, heel, or shoulder experience persistent symptoms that can be difficult to resolve, even when following recommended treatment strategies.

A common example is the runner who develops heel pain that improves temporarily with rest, only to flare up again as soon as training resumes. Others may notice shoulder pain that settles briefly after reducing activity, only to return when lifting overhead or reaching repeatedly throughout the day. These chronic tendon conditions can become frustrating because symptoms often cycle between temporary improvement and recurrence.

Here at LifeMotion Physical Therapy, we are excited to talk about an increasingly utilized technology that we offer for treatment of these conditions: ***extracorporeal shockwave therapy (ESWT)***. ESWT is a non-invasive treatment that uses acoustic pressure waves to stimulate healing in painful or injured tissues. Despite the name "shockwave," the treatment does not involve electrical shocks. Instead, it uses mechanical sound waves delivered to targeted areas of the body.

At *LifeMotion* Physical Therapy, we utilize focused shockwave technology rather than radial shockwave therapy. Focused shockwave allows for more precise energy delivery to deeper targeted tissues, which may be particularly beneficial in certain chronic tendon conditions. This approach also tends to be more comfortable for many patients during treatment.

How Shockwave Therapy Works

Extracorporeal shockwave therapy works through several proposed mechanisms:

- Stimulates blood flow to targeted tissues
- Promotes cellular activity and tissue remodeling
- Modulates pain signaling
- May help break down calcifications in certain conditions

Interestingly, many chronic tendon conditions are no longer believed to be driven primarily by inflammation alone, which helps explain why rest or anti-inflammatory approaches sometimes fail to fully resolve symptoms.

This is one reason shockwave therapy may be helpful in chronic tendon conditions. In many chronic injuries, especially tendinopathies, the body's normal healing process can stall. ESWT appears to help stimulate and support the healing process, particularly when paired with the right rehabilitation approach.



Conditions with Strong Evidence for Shockwave Therapy

Shockwave therapy is best supported in the treatment of chronic tendinopathies and tendon-related pain, particularly when symptoms have persisted despite traditional care.

These conditions often involve a "failed healing response," where the tissue has not been adequately remodeled and pain and dysfunction persist. Shockwave therapy may help stimulate this healing process and reduce pain, especially when combined with an appropriate loading program.

Common conditions where shockwave has been shown to be effective include:

- Plantar fasciitis (especially chronic cases)
- Achilles tendinopathy
- Patellar tendinopathy
- Lateral epicondylalgia (tennis elbow)
- Greater trochanteric pain syndrome
- Rotator cuff tendinopathy

Systematic reviews and meta-analyses have shown that shockwave therapy can lead to meaningful improvements in pain and function in several chronic tendon conditions, particularly plantar fasciitis and calcific shoulder tendinopathy. For example, meta-analyses in plantar fasciitis demonstrate both symptom improvement and structural changes, such as reduced plantar fascia thickness following treatment.

While the strongest evidence for ESWT currently exists in chronic tendon-related conditions, shockwave therapy is also being explored in other areas of rehabilitation and recovery. In some cases, it may be utilized to support healing and symptom management in acute soft tissue injuries, such as certain ankle sprains or muscle strains. Emerging research is also investigating its potential role in other applications, including men's pelvic health conditions such as erectile dysfunction (ED). As with any treatment, appropriate patient selection and integration into a broader rehabilitation plan remain important.

When We Consider Using Shockwave Therapy

In our clinic, shockwave therapy is typically considered when:

- Symptoms have been present for **3 months or longer**
- Progress has plateaued with exercise-based rehabilitation
- The condition is localized and consistent with a tendon-related presentation

This helps ensure we're using the right tool for the right problem, rather than applying it broadly.

What to Expect During Treatment

Shockwave therapy sessions are relatively short, typically lasting **10–15 minutes per area**.

Patients often describe the sensation as:

- A tapping or pulsing feeling
- Mild to moderate discomfort, especially over sensitive areas

The treatment is generally well tolerated and does not require anesthesia.

Alongside ESWT, we provide a progressive loading program tailored to your specific needs and goals. This may involve soft tissue mobilization, assisted movements via springs or bands, guided exercise, and recovery tools such as compression and cryotherapy.



What to Expect After Treatment

It's common to experience some soreness for **24–48 hours** following treatment. You may utilize acetaminophen (Tylenol) for discomfort if appropriate for you. We generally recommend avoiding anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen or naproxen during the treatment period, as these may interfere with the intended healing response.

Unlike passive treatments that aim for immediate relief, shockwave therapy works by stimulating a healing response. Because of this:

- Improvements are usually gradual over several weeks, and tissue remodeling may take **6–12 weeks** to occur

Most treatment plans involve **3–5 sessions**, spaced about a week apart.

A Thoughtful, Evidence-Based Approach

Shockwave therapy is not a "quick fix," but it can be a valuable tool when used in the right context.

The best outcomes are typically seen when it is combined with:

- Progressive loading and strengthening
- Movement retraining
- A structured rehabilitation plan

Our goal is always to match the treatment to the individual, using evidence-based tools, including shockwave therapy when appropriate, to support long-term recovery and function.

If you're dealing with persistent tendon pain and wondering whether shockwave therapy may be appropriate for you, our team can help determine whether it fits your condition, goals, and overall rehabilitation plan. Give us a call at 918-574-2575, or fill out our contact form on our website.

Google Reviews

The team at LifeMotion are terrific to work with. I'm rehabbing an Achilles injury now and they've made me feel very comfortable and confident through each exercise. Very knowledgeable and personal approach to care. Highly recommend!!! - **Greg H.**

★★★★★

If I could give 10 stars I would. I started LifeMotion with a severe case of vertigo and balance issues. After several months of therapy with great physical therapists, I'm 100% better! Great staff, from the front desk to the physical therapists. - **Mary B.**

★★★★★

Welcoming and positive environment. Knowledgeable physical therapists, with a blend of traditional and newer (and highly effective) methods. Great communicators as well. As a runner recovering from injury, I couldn't recommend them more - **Justin L.**

★★★★★



WINNER!



A Message From Ryan

Hard to believe that summer is right around the corner! At LifeMotion, we are working hard to help our athletes get across the finish line for spring sports, assisting family members get ready for graduation festivities all across the country, and working to help those prepare for big summer vacations across the world. One of the key tools we have added to our arsenal of evidence-based treatments is Shockwave Therapy. It is effective in cleaning up many of those lingering pains we get - plantar fasciitis, tennis elbow, and rotator cuff pain. If you have not tried this modality yet, we highly recommend it to speed up results.

Speaking of results, you may remember I injured my plantar fascia last August likely due to much exercise on improper footwear. And I probably didn't help it by walking 40+ miles in several days for a longstanding golf trip to Bandon Dunes (yes, we are clinicians, we make questionable decisions). The recovery has been long and at times very frustrating. But with patience, consistent use of cutting-edge treatments including Shockwave Therapy, and a controlled loading program, I am happy to report that I am back playing golf, jogging and jumping again!

We are proud to announce our selection to the Tulsa People A-List again in 2026! We really appreciate everyone who voted for us.

As always, we appreciate your support of our clinic and the team. We get great joy seeing so many of you reach your goals after injury or surgery. And as always, if you, a loved one, or friend is in need of orthopedic, pelvic or balance care - LifeMotion is only a call or click away. Come see us!

Go To LifeMotion

Resources

1. Xue, X., Geng, Q., Yang, X., et al. (2024). *Effect of extracorporeal shockwave therapy for rotator cuff tendinopathy: A systematic review and meta-analysis.* BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders, 25, https://doi.org/10.1186/s12891-024-07284-1
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