



## Shock wave therapy for tennis elbow: How effective is shock wave treatment to relieve elbow pain?

**! Very little benefit: The arm usually continues to be painful despite shock wave therapy.**

	with placebo therapy	with shock wave therapy
Patients with elbow pain	<b>per 10</b>	<b>per 10</b>
After 8 weeks: no more or almost no more pain medication	7	8
After 12 weeks: pain after long periods of activity, restricted mobility or prescribed medication	7	7
After 12 weeks: no pain, full mobility and no further prescribed medication	3	3

✓ Explanations and sources

**! Side effects: Shock wave therapy often triggers additional pain. It can also induce nausea.**



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Placebo therapy means that the therapy with shock waves is only simulated. This is possible in different ways. In the study cited here, a concealed, cushioned block of material was inserted between the device and the patient's body to intercept or reflect the waves before reaching the arm.

The figures in the table show that of every 10 patients who undergo regular shock wave therapy, 8 required almost no to no pain medication after approx. 8 weeks. Yet after approx. 12 weeks, 7 of these 10 patients still suffered pain after longer periods of activity, experienced restricted mobility or even required prescription pain medication. Only 3 were pain-free with full mobility at this point. In the group of patients who received only the placebo therapy, the results were the same. The different figures for those taking pain medication after eight weeks are likely coincidental. The data are rounded.

Many patients with tennis elbow often suffer symptoms for years and have already tried different therapies to no avail. However, studies up to now have been unable to find any evidence of a therapy that is truly effective. No therapy has been shown to have any notable advantage over simply waiting.

**Source:** Buchbinder et al. (2009). [Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2005, Fourth edition, Art. No.: CD003524](#). The 8-week data are based on a study with approx. 180 patients. The 12-week data are based on a study with approx. 270 patients.

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Placebo therapy means that the therapy with shock waves is only simulated. This is possible in different ways. In the study cited here, a concealed, cushioned block of material was inserted between the device and the patient's body to intercept or reflect the waves before reaching the arm. Furthermore, the patients heard the same sounds during the placebo therapy as during real therapy.

The figures show that of every 10 patients, 7 of those having shock wave therapy experienced pain compared to only 3 of those having placebo therapy. 2 patients of every 10 having shock wave therapy suffered nausea, but less than 1 in 10 of those having placebo therapy. The data are rounded.

**Source:** Buchbinder et al. (2009). [Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2005, Fourth edition, Art. No.: CD003524](#). The data on side effects are based on two studies with approx. 230 patients.

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The AOK, the federal association of health insurance funds, is developing its fact boxes together with Prof. Dr. Gerd Gigerenzer, director of the Harding Centre for Risk Literacy at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin.

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