

Patient information

Transoesophageal Echocardiogram (TOE)

Cardiology Labs – Aintree Hospital

What is a transoesophageal echocardiogram (TOE)?

Transoesophageal Echocardiograph (TOE) is a method of obtaining echocardiograph scan pictures of the heart using ultrasound without having to pass the sound waves through the chest wall.

Why do I need to have a TOE?

An echocardiogram is a painless scan of the heart using high frequency sound waves.

Placing some jelly and then a probe, on the left hand side of the chest wall, over the heart is how an echocardiogram is usually carried out.

In some patients however, this approach is not possible or produces pictures of inadequate quality, and a different route for obtaining the pictures has to be used.

What are the benefits of having a TOE?

Excellent pictures of your heart can be produced in this way. These pictures of the heart can give us important information about its structure and function.

What are the risks of having a TOE?

This is a very safe procedure. However, as with many procedures, it does carry a very small risk of complications.

There is a possibility of damage to teeth, pharynx and oesophagus.

There is a very small chance of abnormalities to your heart rhythm or an adverse reaction to the medication.

You will be able to discuss the procedure with the doctor. You will be asked to sign a consent form to say that you understand the procedure and what it involves.

There might be mild discomfort with the probe/tube in the mouth and as it passes down the food pipe. It will stay there for about 10 to 15 minutes.

Many patients can tolerate the procedure and have the test done without sedation but we can offer intravenous sedation.

Please note that this is not a full general anaesthetic and you would not be completely asleep.

A doctor and physiologist will be present to support you and monitor you throughout the test.

How do I prepare for a TOE?

- **You must not eat or drink for at least six hours before the test to stop you from being sick during it.**
- A family member or friend should accompany you for your appointment at the hospital in case you require sedation.
- Wear comfortable, loose fitting clothing.

What anaesthetic or sedation will I be given?

You will be given anaesthetic throat spray (Xylocaine) and you may be given intravenous sedation (Midazolam).

The drugs used in sedation may affect your memory or concentration for up to 24 hours. Many patients remember nothing about the procedure or even what the doctor has said to them afterwards. For these reasons, you must have a friend or relative collect you from the department.

If you are worried about any of these risks, please speak to your consultant or a member of their team before you are due to have this treatment.

What does the test consist of?

You will lie down on a couch, and you may have a small needle/cannula inserted in the back of your hand or arm. A local anaesthetic spray is used to numb your throat.

A small mouth guard will then be placed in your mouth, and you will be asked to gently bite on it. This guard protects your teeth from damage by the flexible tube and protects the tube from your teeth.

If required a small amount of sedative drug will then be injected through a cannula inserted in the back of your hand or arm to help, make you feel relaxed and drowsy.

A probe (transducer) that has been reduced in size to just a few centimetres is mounted at the end of a flexible tube, which you will be asked to swallow.

The tube will then pass from your mouth down your gullet (oesophagus) and into your stomach. In this position, the probe will lie directly behind your heart so that the ultrasound waves can reach the heart very easily without being obstructed by lungs or ribs.

After your TOE

Afterwards, if you have had sedation as part of your procedure you will almost certainly feel drowsy and want to sleep for a while.

You will be able to do so if you wish and you should therefore be prepared to stay for about two hours in all.

Just as when you have an anaesthetic at the dentist, you will be asked to take things easy for the rest of the day.

If you are at all worried about the test, you may contact the Cardiology Labs team who will be happy to answer your questions.

Important advice

- You must not eat or drink for at least six hours before the test to stop you from being sick during it.
- Please be careful and rest when you get home.
- You may have difficulty remembering the procedure and the results that you may have been given. This will be the result of the sedation, which can stay in your system for up to 24 hours.
- You are advised to have a responsible adult to stay with you for the next 24 hours.
- For the next 24 hours; if you have been given sedation for your procedure, you must not:
 - Drive a car or ride a motorbike.
 - Operate machinery – including a kettle.
 - Drink alcohol.
 - Climb ladders.
 - Sign any legally binding documents.

Patient Chaperones

Unfortunately, for safety reasons we cannot allow a relative or friend to act as a chaperone for a Transoesophageal Echocardiogram. However, if facilities and personnel allow - a chaperone may be provided on request.

Please inform our reception staff if you feel you may require a chaperone to accompany you during your procedure.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further Information

If you have any questions or require any further information about the above procedure please contact the Lead Cardiac Physiologist on Tel: 0151 529 2700.

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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