

Patient Information

Transoesophageal Echocardiogram

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Your Doctor has decided that you should have a Transoesophageal Echocardiogram

What is it?

♥ A transoesophageal echocardiogram (TOE) is a heart scan that uses ultrasound (sound waves) to produce images of the heart. The test is painless and does not use radioactivity. It involves swallowing a soft flexible tube as the pictures are taken via the gullet.

Why is it being done?

♥ A TOE allows your Doctor to take extremely detailed images of your heart. A TOE is often used to look carefully at the valves and the structure of the heart.

♥ The TOE will help the Doctor decide on the best treatment for your heart.

What does it involve?

♥ This procedure is performed as a day-case. Please follow the instructions/directions on your appointment letter on where and at what time to report to.

♥ Three people will usually be present to perform the scan, a Doctor, a Cardiac Physiologist/Sonographer and an assistant/nurse.

♥ You will have stickers attached, so that your heart rate can be monitored throughout the scan. You will also have your blood pressure checked, and be given oxygen. You will be able to breathe completely normally throughout the test.

♥ You will have some local anaesthetic sprayed on the back of your throat and then asked to lay on your left hand side. A drip will be placed in your arm. If you have dentures, you will be asked to remove them before the test. Often, you will then be given some sedation to relax you, although you will not be completely asleep.

♥ You will then be asked to swallow the TOE probe. This part may cause discomfort, but is not painful. Recorded images of the heart will then be obtained. All of the images taken will be stored on a database which is only accessed by selected NHS personnel responsible for your care.

Please note: If you do not wish to have your information stored on the database the only way we can comply with this request is not to perform the test. The whole test will take about 45 minutes.

♥ At the end of the procedure, the tube will be removed, your blood pressure will be checked

again, and you will be allowed a short period of recovery.

Are there any special precautions that I need to take before the TOE?

♥ **You must NOT eat or drink anything for 6 hours before the test.** Do not wear any false nails or nail varnish.

♥ **Normal medications should be taken on the morning of the TOE with a small sip of water.** Please bring a copy of your prescription with you.

If you have diabetes, please inform the nurses as soon as you arrive at the Day Care unit. If you are on Warfarin, your INR should have been checked within the preceding 7 days.

♥ **Please inform your Doctor if you have any problems with swallowing, or if you have had any bleeding from your stomach. This may prevent the TOE from being performed.**

At the end of your TOE

♥ After the test, you will be monitored for a short period of recovery. When you are fully alert and the sensation has returned to your throat, you will be allowed a **cold** drink.

♥ You will be allowed home when you are fully awake, usually 2-3 hours after the procedure.

Before you are discharged, the results of the scan will be explained to you.

♥ **If you have been given sedation, you should NOT drive or operate heavy machinery for the remainder of the day.**

You should be accompanied home by a friend or relative. You can go back to normal activities the following day.

Are there any risks in having the TOE?

♥ The TOE scan is extremely safe, but there are some risks you need to be aware of.

♥ It is not uncommon to have a sore throat after the procedure. This may last for a day or two.

♥ Occasionally the throat may bruise or bleed slightly.

♥ There is a small chance of inhaling stomach contents during the procedure. This is why it is important that **you do NOT eat or drink anything for six hours before the procedure.**

♥ There is an extremely small risk (less than 1 in 10,000) of damaging or tearing the gullet. In extreme circumstances this may require an operation to repair the damage.

♥ Your Doctor would not be requesting the TOE unless he or she felt it would help in deciding on the best treatment for your heart. If

you have any questions regarding the TOE
please contact your Doctor's secretary, or this
unit.

This document has been adapted from the British
Society of Echocardiography
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**This leaflet is also available in large
print Contact: Cardiology Department
South West Cardiothoracic Centre
Tel: 01752 431663**

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