

Patient Information Cardiology

A Guide to Transoesophageal Echo

What is a transoesophageal echo?

A transoesophageal echo (TOE) is a heart scan that uses ultrasound to produce images of the heart. It involves swallowing a soft, flexible tube, as the pictures are taken via the oesophagus (gullet). This produces high quality pictures of the valves and structure of the heart and will help the doctor make an informed decision on your treatment.

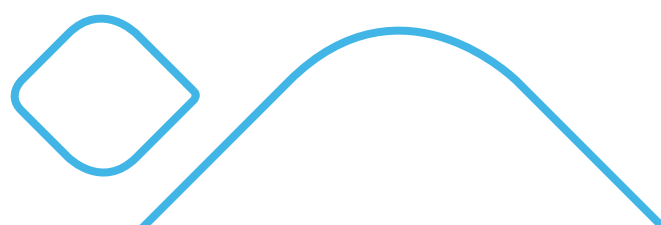
What does a transoesophageal echo involve?

- Three people will usually be present to perform the scan, a doctor, a physiologist and a nurse.
- You will have your heart monitored throughout the scan and your blood pressure and oxygen levels will be checked. You may be given oxygen. You will be able to breathe normally throughout the test.
- If you have dentures these will be removed.
- You will have local anaesthetic sprayed on the back of your throat and then asked to lie flat and roll onto your left side.
- Sedation will be administered through IV cannula which makes you physically and mentally relaxed during a procedure where your cooperation is needed. It will also reduce any anxiety you have about your treatment.
- You will be asked to swallow the TOE probe. This may cause discomfort but is not painful. Recorded images of the heart will then be obtained. The test will take about 20 minutes.
- At the end of the procedure the tube will be removed, your blood pressure re-checked, and you will have a short period of recovery.

Are there any risks or side effects of the TOE?

TOE is an extremely safe procedure, but there are some risks and side effects 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. Therefore, it is essential that you are **nil by mouth for six hours** prior to the procedure (*please see below for more information*).
- There is a 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.



What are the risks of sedation?

After the procedure you may feel very sleepy for several hours. Response to sedation varies from one person to another. Your breathing may become very slow. Your doctor or nurse may give you oxygen to help you breathe. Your blood pressure may become lower. If this occurs you may be given intravenous fluids ("put on a drip") for a short time. Some people can feel nauseous owing to the drugs used in sedation.

What do I need to do before the test?

- Please ensure you are **nil by mouth for 6 hours** before the test. This means you must not have anything to eat or drink (including medications, gum or sweets) prior to your procedure.
- Please inform the team if you have any problems with swallowing, if you have had any bleeding from your stomach, or if you have any loose teeth. This may prevent the TOE from being performed.
- If you have Sickle Cell Disease, please let the medical team know as sedation is contraindicated in this condition.

What happens after the TOE?

- You will be monitored for a short period after the procedure particularly if you have had sedation.
- Due to the sedation you may remember little about what happened and often you will remember nothing.
- After 1 hour, when the sensation in your throat has returned to normal, you may drink cold fluids. Warm fluids and food allowed after 2hrs.
- The doctor will prepare a report following the procedure and inform your consultant of the result.

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Combe Park, Bath, BA1 3NG

01225 428331 | www.ruh.nhs.uk

If you would like this leaflet in email form, large print, braille or another language, please contact the Patient Support and Complaints team on 01225 825656.