Patient information

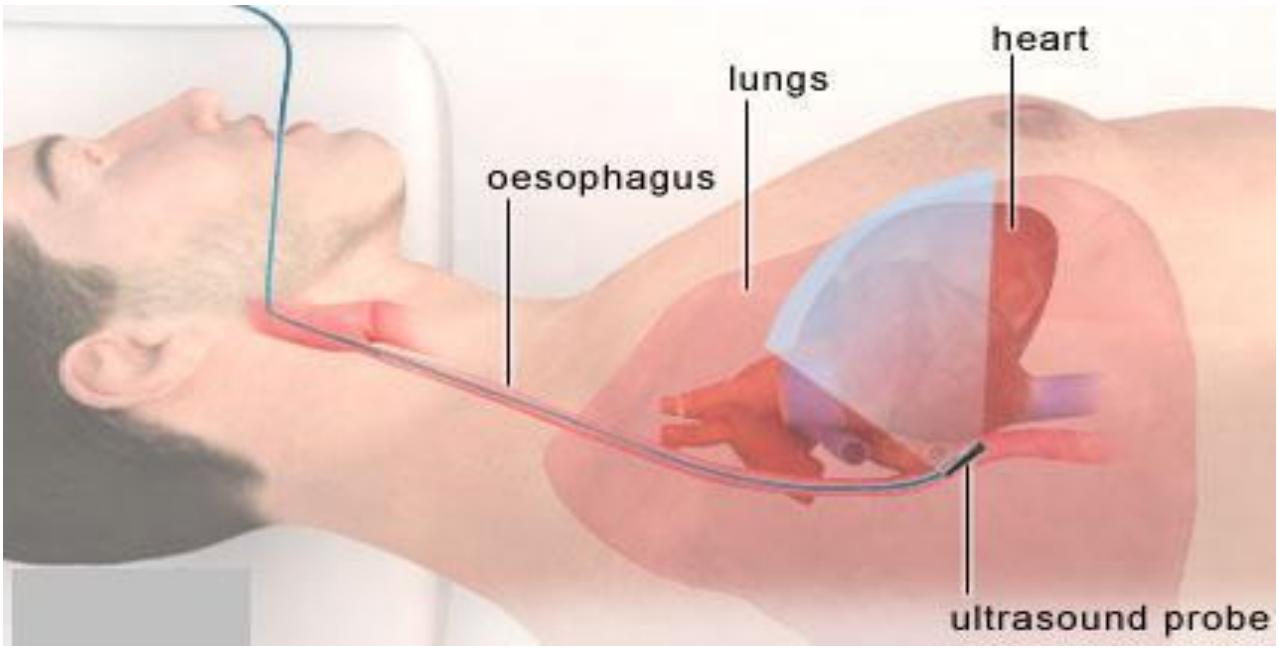
Transoesophageal Echo

What is a Transoesophageal Echo (TOE)?

A Transoesophageal Echo, or TOE as it is often called, is a procedure that allows us to take detailed images of the inside of the heart, by passing a probe into the oesophagus (gullet or food pipe). The probe is connected to a machine which uses ultrasound waves to transmit a picture onto the screen. This allows us to get a better picture of the chambers and valves inside your heart.

What does the procedure involve?

The procedure is performed by passing a long flexible tube through your mouth and gently passing over your tongue to the back of your throat and down into your oesophagus.



Putting you first

The oesophagus lies directly behind the heart, so the images are much clearer than those from the front of the chest where the chest wall, ribs and lungs get in the way.

When you arrive you will be met by a nurse who will ask you some questions. A cannula (needle) will be placed into your arm and blood may be taken. Your vital signs (pulse, respirations, blood pressure and oxygen level), will be monitored and recorded. Before the procedure a doctor or nurse will explain the procedure to you and you will then be asked to sign a consent form. Don't be afraid to say if there is anything you do not understand.

You will then be taken into the room where the procedure is to be performed. In the room with you will be doctors, nurses and cardiac physiologists. You will be asked to remove glasses or any dentures. Please let us know if you are hard of hearing as we will be talking to you during the procedure.

A local anaesthetic will then be sprayed at the back of your throat. This is to numb your throat so you are less likely to gag when the probe is passed.

You will then be asked to lie down on your left side. Sticky pads called electrodes will be placed on your chest so that we can monitor your heart rhythm. A mouth guard will be placed between your teeth to prevent you from biting the probe and some oxygen tubing will be placed just inside your nostrils. A blood pressure cuff will be placed on your arm and an oxygen probe on your finger. These are so that we can monitor your vital signs during the procedure.

The doctor will then give you some sedation through the cannula in your arm. This will help to relax you and may make you feel a little sleepy.

The probe sheath will then be lubricated and then placed into your mouth through the mouth guard. You will be asked to swallow a few times to help the probe pass into your oesophagus (food pipe). This part of the procedure may be a little uncomfortable but it should not be painful. Once the probe is in place it should only be mildly uncomfortable. You will still be able to breathe normally through your mouth or nose.

During the procedure the nurse who will be supporting your head, will reassure you and may use some suction to get rid of the extra saliva in your mouth.

When the procedure is finished, the probe and mouth guard will be removed.

How long will it take?

The procedure itself should take no longer than 40 minutes. The length of time the probe is in varies, but is usually around 20 minutes. You will, however, be in hospital for the whole afternoon as the preparation time can take half an hour

and you will need to stay for a while after the procedure, to allow the effects of the sedation to wear off.

What do I need to do before the procedure?

Complete the questionnaire that has been sent to you and bring it with you to your appointment. Also bring along your glasses and hearing aid if you need them.

It is very important that you do **NOT** eat or drink for at least 6 hours before your appointment, as this could lead to your procedure being cancelled. It is also important that you do not consume alcohol for at least 24hrs prior to your procedure, as this can increase the effect of the sedation.

If you are diabetic, **do not** take your tablets or insulin on the morning of the test. You will be able to take them afterwards as soon as you are able to eat. You may take your other medication as normal with a sip of water.

If you are taking **WARFARIN** please contact your GP or Hospital Doctor, as special arrangements may be needed. Please ensure you have had a recent INR blood test.

Because you will be having sedation, you will also need to make sure that you have someone to collect you and stay with you overnight. This person must come to the unit to collect you. **You will not be allowed to drive for 24hrs**. If you need hospital transport, please let us know beforehand.

What happens after the procedure?

When you first return, you will be asked to stay lying down for a while and will continue to receive oxygen and have your vital signs checked. Once you are awake enough and we are happy with your vital signs, we will allow you to sit up.

After the procedure you will not be allowed to eat or drink for 2 hours, to allow the throat spray to wear off. After this time you will be allowed sips of water. If these are tolerated you will then be allowed to have a light snack and a warm drink.

Are there any risks?

As with any medical procedure, the risk must be compared to the benefit of having the procedure carried out. The doctor who has requested the test will have considered this very carefully.

This procedure is usually very safe and complications are rare. These complications include:

- A reaction to the medication used
- Disturbance of your heart rate and breathing
- Small tear in the lining of the oesophagus, which may require surgery to repair.

After the procedure you may have a sore throat. This will pass and does not need medication.

What happens when I go home?

Before you are discharged, the nurse will make sure you have this information sheet to take home with you.

Sedation lasts longer than you might think, so it is very important that after your procedure you do not do any of the following for at least 24hrs:

- Drive
- Operate any machinery
- Drink alcohol
- Sign any legal documents
- Smoke

If you experience any of the following problems please contact your GP immediately informing them that you have had a Transoesophageal Echo:

- High temperature or feeling feverish
- Vomiting
- Chest Pain

Things to remember before your procedure

- Read this leaflet carefully
- Fill in the health questionnaire
- Do not eat or drink anything for **at least 6 hours** before your procedure
- Check for specific medication instructions
- Make arrangements for someone to collect you from the Cardiology Day Unit and stay with you overnight

If you have any concerns, or would like more information, please contact:

Diagnostic Cardiology	Tel: 01284 712536
Cardiac Nurse Specialists	Tel: 01284 713186
Waiting list enquiries *(appointment enquiries only)*	Tel: 01284 712980

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