

# Transoesophageal echocardiogram



An echocardiogram (echo) uses soundwaves to look at the structure, function and size of your heart.

In a transoesophageal echocardiogram (TOE), a scanner is used to view the heart from within the gullet (oesophagus), just behind the heart. This can give a better view of the heart than a standard echocardiogram.

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## What happens?

The test will take 20-30 minutes but you need to stay in hospital afterwards. The whole appointment may take two hours.

You will be given a calming drug through an IV line inserted in your arm. Saline or a dye may be used to help get a clearer echo image.

A device to measure the oxygen in your blood may be attached to your finger or earlobe. Your heart rate, breathing rate and blood pressure are monitored throughout.

An anaesthetic spray is used to numb your throat. The spray may taste bitter and make your tongue and throat feel numb and swollen. Remember to relax and take deep breaths.

You will lie on your left side with your head tilted forward. A mouthguard will protect your teeth. A thin tube with a probe will be guided down your throat into your gullet.

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This tube is no thicker than many foods you swallow. Once the test ends, the tube is pulled out.

The probe is attached to the scanning machine. From inside your gullet, the probe will produce clear pictures of your heart.

## After the test

Your nurse will tell you when you can eat and drink again. Once you are discharged from the hospital, you will not be able to drive for the rest of the day because of the anaesthetic. You should get someone to drive you home.

**When you phone to confirm your appointment, please let the staff know if you:**

- have any swallowing problems
- have had previous medical problems with your oesophagus or stomach
- take diabetes medication
- take Warfarin or other blood thinning medications (excluding aspirin).

## How do I get ready?

There are eating and drinking restrictions for this test. Please do not eat or drink anything at all for four hours before the test.

If you take Warfarin, you will need to have an INR blood test about four days before your TOE. If the level is too high, the procedure may be postponed.

If you are taking Dabigatran, Praxada, or other blood thinners (anticoagulants), you will be advised how long to stop your medication prior to having the test by a doctor, nurse or other health professional. You will need to have a kidney function test about four days before the test.

## What are the risks of a TOE procedure?

Possible risks associated with a transesophageal echocardiogram include having a sore throat for a day or two after the test.

Rare risks include:

- Breathing problems
- Heart rhythm problems
- Infection
- Bleeding
- Oral or esophageal injury.

## Key points

- An echocardiogram uses soundwaves to look at the structure, size and function of your heart
- A TOE gives a better view of the heart than a standard echocardiogram because the scanner is placed down your throat, behind your heart
- A TOE takes up to two hours
- There are some risks associated with this test.