

Transoesophageal Echocardiogram

What is a Transoesophageal Echocardiogram?

The Transoesophageal Echocardiogram (TOE) uses a tube or probe placed in the gullet (oesophagus) to take close up moving pictures of the heart using ultrasound.

How is it done?

After you are sedated, the TOE probe is placed via the mouth into the gullet just behind but not touching your heart. The heart sits just in front of the gullet, providing very detailed pictures of the heart. The tube is very similar to a gastroscope used to examine the stomach and gullet for indigestion or stomach ulcers.

What do I do on the day?

Please present yourself to Ground Floor enquiries for directions to Admissions, after which you will be directed to Ward 2E.

Do not drive yourself to the hospital - arrange for a driver or other transportation to bring you and take you home. Because you will receive sedation, you will not be permitted to drive yourself home. Please bring your Medicare card, a list of all medications and your doctor's referral.

Can I eat and drink before my test?

You must not eat or drink for **at least 8 hours and preferably 12 hours** before your appointment - otherwise your test may be cancelled. Eg. Fast from midnight for a morning appointment.

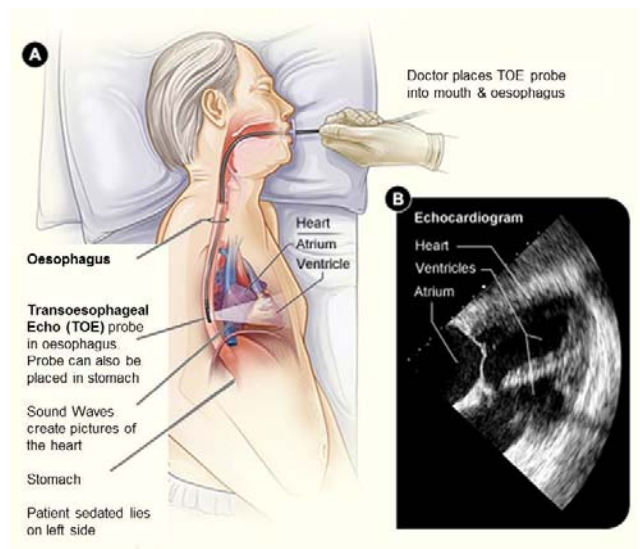
Do I take my medications on the day of the test?

Ask your doctor for specific instructions about taking your medication. In general, take all your normal medications unless otherwise instructed. Morning medication can be taken with a small sip of water. If you are diabetic, discuss this with your referring doctor.

What happens during the test?

This test is performed by a Cardiologist, an assistant and usually an Anaesthetist. The Doctor will place an intravenous line into your arm to give you some short acting sedation. Your throat will be sprayed with a local anaesthetic to allow the probe to pass painlessly into your gullet. You will be asked to remove any dentures. A small plastic mouth guard will be used to protect your teeth. Oxygen will be given to you by a tube placed near your nose.

When your throat is numb, you will be asked to lie on your left side. You will be drowsy but awake enough to follow instructions. While you are sedated the doctor will position the probe in your throat and ask you to swallow. The probe is then guided into your gullet. The probe is approximately 1.2 cm or 1/2 inch wide.



For most people this is not uncomfortable but extra sedation and pain relief can be administered if necessary. The test takes about 20 minutes. When it is finished you will be taken to a recovery area where you will wake up fully within 10-20 minutes. While your throat is numb you will not be able to eat or drink because your swallowing is impaired - within 1-1.5 hours it will return to normal.

How long does the test take?

Allow 4 hours for this appointment.

What are the risks?

Ultrasound itself carries no known risks and there are no known biological effects related to the ultrasound waves.

While every effort is made to minimise the risks of the procedure, there are small but definite risks of complications.

- **Minor risks**

- Discomfort in the throat - this may affect up to 20% of people but is minimised by local anaesthetic and sedation. It will quickly disappear.
- Injury to teeth or dentures - precautions are taken to avoid this by use of the mouthguard or removal of dentures.
- You must not drive for 6-8 hours after this test because even small amounts of sedation may affect driving skills.

- **Serious but very rare problems include**

- Unexpected onset of breathing difficulties such as asthma, or spasm of the airways.
- Abnormalities of heart rhythm.
- Unexpected allergy to one of the drugs administered.
- Perforation of the gullet - this is more likely if the gullet is already diseased.
- Inhalation of stomach contents leading to lung infection
- Death or the need for resuscitation - this is extremely rare (1 in 10,000)

The doctor ordering the test is well aware of these risks, and will have taken them into account before recommending the test. Please discuss these issues prior to agreeing to have this test.

How will I get my results?

The TOE results are reported on by a Cardiologist. These results are forwarded to your referring doctor within the following five days.