

Cardiology department

Transesophageal Echocardiogram (TOE)

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

This leaflet explains what will happen when you come to hospital for a transesophageal echocardiogram (TOE). We hope it will answer some of the questions that you or those who care for you may have at this time. This leaflet is not meant to replace the discussion between you and your medical team but aims to help you understand more about what is discussed.

What is a transesophageal echocardiogram (TOE)?

It is a test where a probe is inserted into the oesophagus (throat). This provides a clear image of the heart because the ultrasound waves do not have to pass through skin, muscle or bone tissue. The TOE probe is much closer to the heart since the oesophagus and heart are right next to each other.

Having this test means that your doctor can identify any problems with your heart valves and the structure in more detail and recommend appropriate treatment.

Are there any risks involved in having this test?

There is a very small risk of damaging the oesophagus (1 in 5,000 patients).

Some people may experience a sore throat after the test. Please speak with your care team if you have any concerns or questions.

Before the test

Please tell the doctor who has ordered the test if you have had difficulties with swallowing, stomach or gullet disorders.

On the day of your test

Please do not:

- eat or drink for at least six hours before the test
- take your morning medication (except warfarin or other anticoagulants e.g. Apixaban, Rivaioxaban, Dabigatran) unless instructed to do so by your doctor. If you do take any medication please take this with a small sip of water only

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- drive or operate heavy machinery after your test for the rest of that day

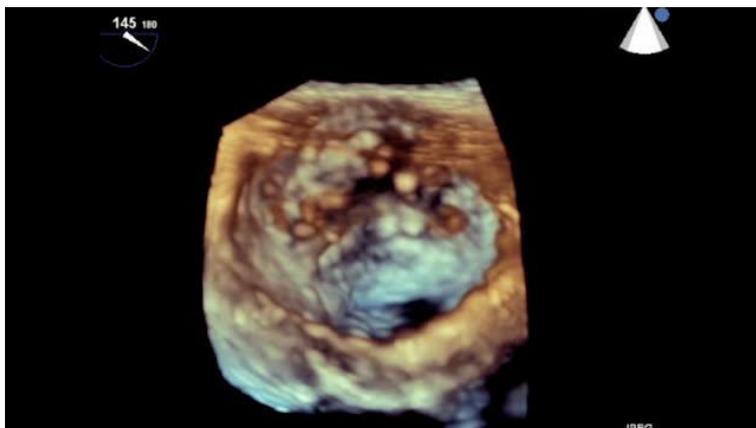
Please:

- arrange for a friend / relative to accompany you on the day as you will be sedated during the test. You will need someone to stay with you overnight at home

During the test

An echocardiographer will usually do the scan and a doctor will usually lead it. Once you enter the room, they will check that you understand the test and agree to go ahead with it. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions you may have about the test.

- The scan takes place in a private room
- We will give you a hospital gown and ask you to temporarily remove any glasses or dentures
- The test will take place with you lying on a bed. The doctor will insert a small needle into a vein in your arm to give you the sedation drugs
- We will place a small plastic bite guard between your teeth
- We will monitor your blood pressure throughout the test and your heart rhythm (using an ECG). This involves putting 3 electrodes (patches) on your chest. Your oxygen levels will be monitored with a clip lightly attached to your finger
- Once you are comfortable we will ask you to swallow an ultrasound probe. Although this is not pleasant, it should not be painful. People often find it difficult to swallow the probe - a sedative injection can be given to make it easier
- When the probe is in place you will still be able to breathe normally through your nose and mouth
- The procedure takes about one hour



An example of the images captured during the test

After the test

We will monitor your heart rhythm and blood pressure for about half an hour after the test. Before leaving the hospital we will advise you on how to look after yourself at home. Your friend or relative must accompany you home.

Further information

To watch a video about having a transesophageal echocardiogram please visit: www.nhs.uk/conditions/echocardiogram/

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk