

This document will give you information about a trans-oesophageal echocardiogram (TOE). If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is a TOE?

A TOE is a procedure to look at your heart chambers and valves using a flexible telescope placed down your oesophagus (gullet). The telescope has an ultrasound scanner attached to it so your heart specialist can get close-up views of your heart (see figure 1).

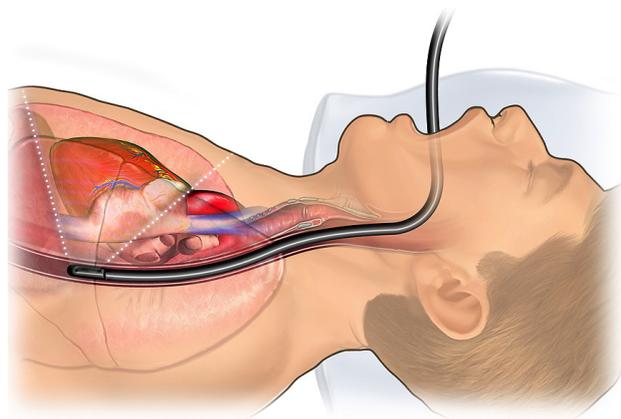


Figure 1

A trans-oesophageal echocardiogram

What are the benefits of a TOE?

A TOE is usually used to help assess a problem with one of your heart valves and can show if it is possible to repair or replace that valve.

A TOE is also used to help guide the heart specialist during procedures to close holes between heart chambers.

If you need a controlled electric shock to treat an abnormal heart rhythm, a TOE is sometimes used first to check if you have a blood clot.

Are there any alternatives to a TOE?

A trans-thoracic echocardiogram also uses ultrasound to give pictures of your heart.

An MRI scan can give good information about your heart chambers but a TOE is the best way to look closely at your heart valves.

What does the procedure involve?

A TOE usually takes 15 to 20 minutes. If appropriate, your heart specialist may offer you a sedative to help you to relax.

Your heart specialist will place a flexible telescope into the back of your throat, into your oesophagus and down to behind your heart. They will use the scanner to take ultrasound images of your heart chambers and valves.

What complications can happen?

- Sore throat
- Allergic reaction
- Breathing difficulties or heart irregularities
- Making a hole in your oesophagus or stomach
- Damage to teeth or bridgework
- Bleeding
- Infection
- Incomplete procedure

How soon will I recover?

If you were not given a sedative, you should be able to go home and return to normal activities straightaway.

You should be able to return to work the next day unless you are told otherwise.

The healthcare team will tell you what was found during the TOE and discuss with you any treatment or follow-up you need.

Regular exercise should improve your long-term health. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Summary

A TOE is usually a safe and effective way of finding out more about a problem in your heart chambers and heart valves.

Acknowledgements

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This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.