

TRANSOESOPHAGEAL ECHOCARDIOGRAPHY

WHAT IS IT?

Stress echocardiography assesses the likelihood that you have significant narrowings in your heart arteries. By comparing your heart function before and after exercise using echocardiography, your Cardiologist can infer whether enough blood is getting to your heart or if a narrowing is restricting this supply. Usually, we stress your heart with exercise although, for patients who are unable to exercise, a drug called dobutamine is used instead of exercise. This drug is infused through a vein in your arm. This variant of stress echocardiography is called 'dobutamine stress echocardiography'.

WHAT IS IT?

Transoesophageal echocardiography (TOE) uses sound waves to produce images of the heart. Unlike standard echocardiography, TOE uses a tube-like device placed in the mouth and passed down the throat into the oesophagus (the food pipe that connects the throat to the stomach) to record images of the heart.

This test shows our Cardiologists the size, shape and movement of your heart muscle and valves. Examination of large blood vessels such as the aorta (the main blood vessel supplying blood to your body) also occurs during this procedure.

PREPARATION

Do not eat or drink anything for 6 hours before your test. If you have diabetes, you should talk to your Cardiologist about food and insulin intake because these can affect your blood sugar levels.

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

The procedure typically takes no longer than 20 minutes. At the beginning of the procedure, the Cardiologist numbs your throat with an anaesthetic spray.

The Cardiologist then places a needle connected to a tube (called an intravenous line or 'IV') into an arm vein. Sedation given through this IV helps you relax throughout the test and most people fall asleep. Next, the Cardiologist passes the small flexible TOE probe into your throat. You are then asked to swallow and the probe gently moves down your throat into your oesophagus.

When in place, you should not feel any pain from this probe. On the end of the probe is the ultrasound camera which takes pictures of your heart from different angles.

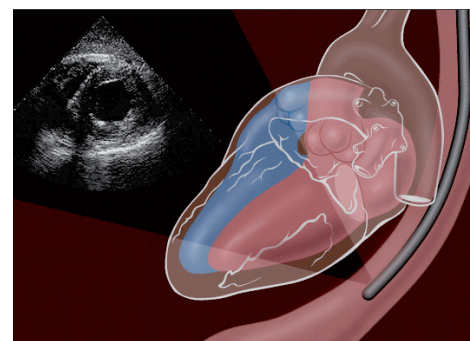
Removal of the probe and IV line occurs when all the required pictures are taken. You may feel sleepy until the sedative has worn off. Monitoring of your heart rate and blood pressure occurs during this recovery period.

You may find that you have a sore throat or trouble swallowing after the procedure, however, these side effects usually subside after a day. Occasionally, you are required to stay in hospital overnight.

The Cardiologist analyses the images and sends the report to your referring doctor, usually on the same day.

By law, you must not drive a motor vehicle or operate machinery within 12 hours of this procedure. Therefore, you will need to organize transport home and a responsible adult should stay with you during the rest of the day.

You should read the consent form (over page) and understand the risks involved with this procedure. Please clarify any concerns or queries about this procedure with your Cardiologist before signing this form on the day of the procedure.



▲ The TOE probe, when placed in the food pipe, can capture high quality pictures of the heart.

BOOKINGS 07 3858 8690

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