

Transoesophageal Echocardiogram



What is it?

A transoesophageal echocardiogram (T.O.E), is similar to an echocardiogram, but is performed via an ultrasound transducer, or probe, sitting in the oesophagus or food pipe. This test takes approximately 40 minutes.

When is it used?

A 'trans-thoracic' or traditional echocardiogram is performed by placing a probe on the chest wall. The ultrasound waves need to pass through skin, fat and muscle while avoiding the ribs and lungs. As you can imagine these factors play a significant role in the quality of results obtained. In certain instances this test does not allow clear vision of specific areas of the heart. The T.O.E. probe will lie much closer to the heart than a traditional probe, providing a clearer and more detailed view of your heart's structures.

How do I prepare for Transoesophageal Echocardiogram?

As this procedure is undertaken in hospital you will need to complete your admission paperwork, which the Nepean Cardiology staff will provide to you, and return to the admitting hospital at least three days prior to your admission date. This paperwork can be submitted online for Peninsula Private Hospital if you'd prefer.

You will need to fast for six hours prior to the admission time however any medication you need to continue to take can be taken with a sip of water. Please continue to take all medications as normal unless specifically directed by your Cardiologist to cease them. Please bring a list of current medications or the medication bottles with you to the hospital.

You will need to have someone drive you to and from the hospital, and stay with you at home the night of the procedure. You will not be able to drive yourself or take a taxi alone after the procedure. Please advise the Nepean Cardiology staff if you do not have someone to stay with you after the procedure as they will arrange for an overnight hospital admission.

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What should I expect on the day of my Transoesophageal Echocardiogram?

Once admitted to hospital, you will be asked to remove any jewellery and put a hospital gown on. A doctor will then give you a brief examination, and answer any questions that you may have. To aid the procedure the back of your throat is sprayed with local anaesthetic. This causes the area to become numb. The nurse will insert an intravenous line to allow for the administration of a small dose of relaxant. This helps the muscles of the throat and neck to relax and aids swallowing of the small probe used for the procedure. To protect the teeth you will have a mouth-guard in place, Should you have dentures these will temporarily be removed. As the probe passes over the tongue and into the back of the throat you will be asked to swallow. This will have the probe in the correct position so that you can relax while the images are being acquired. You may experience excess saliva 'dribbling' while the tube is down your throat but you should not be concerned since protective sheets and suction is provided. When the procedure is complete, you will be moved to recovery and monitored by the nurse for a short time. You will be allowed home after two to four hours but we do require you to be accompanied by an adult / carer on the day who can then take you home.

What happens afterwards?

Your doctor will explain the results of the procedure and the need for any further procedures. The information about your heart will help your doctor to recommend the best treatment for you.

A report will be provided to your usual cardiologist and GP.

You must not drive, drink alcohol, sign important documents or participate in heavy lifting or sports after your procedure.

Are there any risks?

As with any medical tests, there are some risks, but the risk of complication is very low. A sore throat and minor bleeding can be experienced. You should discuss with your doctor any questions or concerns that you may have about Transoesophageal Echocardiogram.