

How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the entrance to every ward before coming in to or after leaving the ward. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand sanitiser. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

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Transoesophageal Echocardiography

Patient information leaflet

If you require a translation or an alternative format of this leaflet please call the Cardiology Booking Coordinator on 01494 425902

Safe & compassionate care,

every time

Introduction

A Transoesophageal Echocardiogram (TOE) is a test that allows us to take detailed, moving images of your heart using ultrasound.

The technology is similar to that used for a standard ultrasound examination, but a TOE involves placing a probe into the oesophagus (also called the 'food pipe').

A TOE probe is a soft, flexible tube, that is gently passed through your mouth and down into your oesophagus. The investigation is carried out under sedation and a local anaesthetic throat spray is used to minimise discomfort. This gives very clear and accurate pictures of the heart; much better than those obtained by using a probe on the skin. This is because the oesophagus lies just behind the heart and there is no interference from the ribs or the lungs.

How does a TOE help?

This test will give us extremely detailed images of the heart. This examination is performed to help assess the structure and function of your heart, which will help in diagnosing and/or assessing the severity of certain heart conditions. It will help your doctor determine the most appropriate treatment for your heart condition, e.g. it will tell us why a heart valve is leaking and whether it can be repaired or needs replacing.

Who can I contact?

If you have any questions or worries, please contact the Cardiology Booking Coordinators, Gemma Bennett or Sandra Francis on **01494 425902**.

Do not be alarmed if you cannot remember the procedure as the medication used for sedation can temporarily affect your memory

What can go wrong?

This is a safe procedure and complications are very rare. These include perforation (a tear in the wall of the oesophagus) and bleeding. The risk of perforation is low and estimated at less than 1 in 10,000

There is a small risk of damage to your teeth, particularly if they are loose or capped. This is minimised by using a plastic mouthpiece.

Your throat may feel mildly sore for a day or two after the test. Do not eat anything hot for the rest of the day and eat only a light meal following the procedure.

When can I start my normal activities again?

After 24 hours you may resume your normal activities.

When will I be told the results?

We will explain the results of the test when you wake up after the procedure. It may be that you will need to attend an outpatient clinic appointment to discuss treatment options.

On the day of your examination:

- Do not eat anything for six hours before your appointment
- Do not drink anything for four hours before your appointment

Please continue with your normal medication. There is no need to discontinue warfarin or aspirin or any other medication prior to the test.

If you are an insulin-dependent diabetic have an early breakfast with slightly less long-acting insulin, as you will be fasting for 6 hours before the procedure. Diabetics treated with tablets should have an early breakfast and then fast for 6 hours.

Please bring:

- A list of any tablets or medications you are taking
- Your reading glasses

Wear loose and comfortable clothing. Please do not wear any make-up or nail varnish as this can affect our monitoring systems. Do not use any moisturising lotions or skin creams. Please do not bring jewellery or large sums of money with you as we are unable to accept responsibility for any loss.

You may want to bring a newspaper or book with you.

What happens when I arrive at the hospital?

On arrival you should report to the Cardiac Day Unit which is located on the upper ground floor of Wycombe Hospital. Go through the double-doors and the nurse's station is on your right hand side. Hand your appointment letter to a member of staff and you will be shown to your bay.

Will I be asked to sign a consent form?

You will be asked to sign a consent form just prior to the procedure taking place. At that point, any risks and the benefit of undergoing the procedure will be fully explained to you. This is a good time to ask any questions you may have about the test.

What does the procedure involve and how long does it last?

On arrival, you will be asked to put on a gown. A cannula (small plastic tube) will be placed in your arm and you will be asked to remove any spectacles, contact lenses or dentures.

- A probe will be attached to your finger to measure your pulse rate and oxygen levels.
- Your blood pressure will be measured.
- Your mouth and throat will be numbed with a local anaesthetic spray and a plastic mouthpiece placed between your teeth.
- You will be attached to a heart monitor and an oxygen supply.

- Sedation will be given at this point.
- The tube will be passed gently through your mouth and down into the oesophagus. The tube will not interfere with your breathing.
- The operator will record a series of moving images of your heart at various angles and depths.
- When the examination is finished the probe is removed easily and quickly.
- The procedure usually takes between 15 and 20 minutes.

What happens after the procedure?

After the procedure you will be allowed to rest and recover. A nurse will check on you regularly. Most people wake up very soon after the procedure, although you may feel quite sleepy. After a while you will be able to get up and walk about. We will then remove the cannula (small tube) from your arm and you may get dressed. You should be able to go home after about two hours.

Do I need someone with me when I go home ?

It is essential that someone comes to pick you up and that you have a responsible adult to stay with you overnight.

It is important to rest and relax for the rest of the day. You must not drive or operate machinery (including a kettle or an oven), sign legal documents or drink alcohol for 24 hours.