

# A Guide To Your Transoesophageal Echocardiogram (TOE)

Patient information: Cardiology Diagnostic and Interventional  
Services

## What is a TOE? (Transoesophageal Echo)

A TOE involves positioning a flexible tube with a small probe (transducer) at the tip, into the oesophagus (the passage which connects your mouth to your stomach). As the oesophagus sits just behind the heart this provides a closer detailed view of the structures within the heart, and the pump function and blood flow of the heart. Using sound waves (ultrasound) this probe produces an image of the heart (echocardiogram or echo) onto a monitor.

Local anaesthetic (throat gargle & spray) are used to numb your throat and you will be given sedation to keep you comfortable and relaxed.

## Sedation Given During Procedure

Intravenous sedation is given routinely for the procedure and there are recognised risks associated with certain activities afterwards.

**You must have a relative or friend pick you up from the day ward because of the effects of the sedation medication.**

It is illegal to drive a motor vehicle while the sedation medication is in your system and you are impaired because of its effect.

You should not drive a motor vehicle, operate heavy machinery, sign legal documents or make important decisions for at least **24 hours** following your procedure.

## Before the test

**You must not have anything to eat or drink for 6 hours before the procedure.**

You will be given a hospital gown to wear.

The test will be fully explained to you. You will then be asked to sign a consent form with your doctor.

An intravenous (IV) line will be placed into a vein in your arm to enable sedation medicine to be given during the test.

## During the test

The test is usually done in the Cardiology Day Unit.

You will be connected to a blood pressure and oxygen monitor. ECG electrodes and leads will be applied to your chest to monitor your condition throughout the procedure.

You will be given a local anaesthetic throat gargle to numb your throat. The doctor will also spray local anaesthetic into the back of your throat to numb it.

If you have dentures these will be removed and a bite guard will be placed in your mouth.

You will be given oxygen through your nose as the sedative medicine can sometimes affect your breathing.

Before the probe is inserted, you will be asked to lie on your left side with your head tilted towards your chest. Sedation will be given through the IV line to keep you comfortable and relaxed, but still able to respond to some instructions. When the probe is inserted towards the back of your throat you will be instructed to swallow, which will assist the doctor to

gently guide the probe into your throat and towards your oesophagus.

Suction may be used to remove any secretions from your mouth.

The procedure takes approximately 15-20 minutes. However you will remain in the day ward for 1-3 hours until you are fully recovered from the sedation medicine.

## After the test

You will be closely monitored until you are fully awake.

You will not be able to eat or drink until the throat anaesthetic has worn off and you can swallow normally (approximately 1 hour). You will then start with sips of water, building up to other fluids and food as tolerated.

Do not drink hot fluids until the effects of the local anaesthetic have fully worn off.

If you are an outpatient or day case, your cardiologist will review your test and discuss the results with you at a follow-up appointment.

Once you are fully recovered the IV line will be removed and you may be discharged (approximately 2-3 hours).

## Are there any risks?

Like all tests, a small amount of risk is involved. These risks will be explained to you before you are asked to give your consent.

Possible side effects:

The back of your throat may feel sore and swallowing uncomfortable but this should wear off quickly.

Possible complications are uncommon but may include:

- Damage to your teeth or dental work (the bite guard will help to prevent this)
- Damage or tear to your oesophagus (very rare)
- An adverse reaction to the sedation medicine
- Inhaling fluid (aspiration) into the lungs

The Cardiology Day Unit is located on the first floor of Parkside West.

### Contact Phone Numbers

Cardiology Day Unit: Phone 364-1071  
(07.30 am—7.00 pm Monday—Friday)

After Hours:

Christchurch Hospital: 364-0640  
when prompted enter extension 89121 for direct dial to Ward 12 Cardiology

or

- when prompted enter extension 89141 for direct dial Ward 14 Cardiology/Nephrology

