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What is a Transesophageal Echocardiogram (TEE)?

Transesophageal echocardiography (TEE) is a test that gives your doctor images of your heart. It is done from inside your esophagus. Because the esophagus lies just behind the heart, TEE gives clearer pictures than standard echocardiography taken from outside the chest. During a TEE, harmless sound waves bounce off your heart. These sound waves create images of your heart on a video screen. The images help your doctor identify problems such as heart infection or disease, or problems with your heart's walls or valves.

Reasons for the Procedure

Transesophageal echocardiography may be performed to evaluate signs and symptoms that may suggest:

- atherosclerosis - a gradual clogging of the arteries
- cardiomyopathy - an enlargement of the heart due to thickening or weakening of the heart muscle
- congenital heart disease - defects in one or more heart structures that occur during formation of the fetus
- congestive heart failure - a condition in which the heart muscle has become weakened to an extent that blood cannot be pumped efficiently, causing buildup in the blood vessels and lungs, and edema of the feet, ankles, and other parts of the body
- aneurysm - a dilation of a part of the heart muscle or the aorta
- valvular heart disease - malfunction of one or more of the heart valves that may cause an obstruction of the blood flow within the heart
- cardiac tumor - a tumor of the heart that may occur on the outside surface of the heart, within one or more chambers of the heart, or within the muscle tissue of the heart
- pericarditis - an inflammation or infection of the sac that surrounds the heart

Additional reasons for which a TEE may be performed include, but are not limited to, the

following:

- to assess the heart's function and structures
- to evaluate the heart during open-heart surgery after procedures such as coronary artery bypass or valve replacement or repair
- to evaluate the cardiac status of people with known heart disease during non-cardiac surgery

Before the Procedure

- Your physician will explain the procedure to you and offer you the opportunity to ask any questions that you might have about the procedure.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form that gives your doctor permission to perform the test. Read the form carefully and ask questions if something is not clear.
- You will need to fast for a certain period of time prior to the procedure. Your physician will notify you how long to fast, whether for a few hours or overnight.
- If you are pregnant or suspect that you may be pregnant, you should notify your physician.
- Notify the physician if you are allergic to or sensitive to medications, local anesthesia, or latex.
- Notify your physician of all medications (prescription and over-the-counter) and herbal supplements that you are taking.
- Notify your physician if you have a history of bleeding disorders or if you are taking any anticoagulant (blood-thinning) medications, aspirin, or other medications that affect blood clotting. It may be necessary for you to stop some of these medications prior to the procedure.
- Your physician may request a blood test prior to the procedure to determine how long it takes your blood to clot. Other blood tests may be done as well.



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- Notify the physician if you have heart valve disease, a congenital heart condition, or a history of endocarditis (infection of the heart valves) as you may need to receive an antibiotic prior to the procedure.
 - You may receive a sedative prior to the procedure to help you relax. If a sedative is given, you will need someone to drive you home afterwards.
 - Based upon your medical condition, your physician may request other specific preparation.
8. You will receive a sedative medication in your IV before the procedure to help you relax.
 9. If indicated, oxygen will be administered through nasal tubes.
 10. The room will be darkened so that the images on the echocardiogram monitor can be viewed by the physician.
 11. The TEE probe will be passed through your mouth and down your throat. You may be asked to swallow to help pass the probe.

During the Procedure

A TEE may be performed on an outpatient basis or as part of your stay in a hospital. Procedures may vary depending on your condition and your physician's practices.

Generally, a TEE follows this process:

1. You will be asked to remove any jewelry or other objects that may interfere with the procedure. If you wear dentures or any oral prosthesis, they will be removed prior to the insertion of the TEE probe.
2. If you are asked to remove clothing, you will be given a gown to wear.
3. You will be asked to empty your bladder prior to the procedure.
4. An intravenous (IV) line will be started in your hand or arm prior to the procedure for injection of medication and to administer IV fluids, if needed.
5. You will lie on a table or bed, positioned on your left side. A pillow or wedge may be placed behind your back for support.
6. You will be connected to an ECG monitor that records the electrical activity of the heart and monitors the heart during the procedure using small, adhesive electrodes. Your vital signs (heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate, and oxygenation level) will be monitored during the procedure.
7. A local anesthetic spray will be applied to the back of the throat. This will numb the back of your throat to make passing the TEE probe more comfortable.

After the Procedure

- Do not drive for 12 hours.
- Your throat will be numb for about 4 hours. Don't eat or drink during that time. Then start with small sips of water. If you swallow the water easily, you can eat and drink normally.
- Your throat will be sore for a few hours. Call your doctor if you experience any of the following symptoms:
 - sore throat or trouble swallowing that lasts more than 24 hours.
 - bleeding
 - internal pain
 - stiff neck

