

What is a TEE?

An echocardiogram is a test that uses ultrasound (high frequency sound waves) to examine the heart. A transesophageal echocardiogram, or TEE, is an echocardiogram that is done from inside the esophagus (the tube leading from the mouth to the stomach).

Because it gives images that are sharp and clear, the TEE is generally performed when doctors want to examine hard-to-see structures of the heart. The most common reasons for doing the exam are:

- To detect blood clots or masses inside the heart.
- To assess the severity of some valve defects.
- To examine prosthetic (artificial) heart valves.
- To evaluate holes between heart chambers.
- To detect infection of the heart valves.
- To diagnose a dissection (a tear) in the lining of the aorta (the body's main artery).
- When the standard echocardiogram is of poor quality or inadequate (such as in people who are obese or have chronic lung disease).

What happens before the test?

- Do not eat or drink for 6 hours prior to your test, unless otherwise instructed by your doctor.
- You may take your medicines with a sip of water, unless otherwise instructed by your doctor.
- If the test is done as an outpatient, have someone drive you to the

hospital. Also, arrange to have someone drive you home after the test.

- Be sure to tell your doctor if you have any problem swallowing or if you have any conditions involving your esophagus or stomach.
- Outpatients should report to Short Stay Care 1 hour prior to the procedure if this is the only procedure you are scheduled for.
- Outpatients should plan to be at the hospital for up to 3 hours.

Upon arrival

- A staff member will talk with you about the medications you are taking, any medication allergies and the reason you are having the exam.
- You'll be given an explanation of the procedure and asked to sign a consent form.
- You will change into a hospital gown.
- An intravenous (IV) line will be inserted into a vein in your arm.

What happens during the test?

- You'll be asked to lie on your left side.
- Your throat is sprayed with an anesthetic to numb it.
- You will be given a sedative through the IV line in your arm to help you relax.
- The doctor gently inserts the probe into your mouth. As you swallow, the tube is slowly directed into the esophagus.
- You may gag when the probe first enters the esophagus, and you



may feel the probe moving, but the procedure is *generally not painful*.

- The transducer is positioned in the esophagus just behind the heart, where high quality images can be recorded. With the help of control knobs, the doctor can move the tip of the probe up, down and sideways. This makes it possible to view various parts of the heart from different angles.
- Your heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen level are carefully monitored throughout the test. Suction may be needed to clear secretions from your mouth. You may also be given oxygen.

What happens after the test?

- Do not eat or drink for about an hour, or until your throat is no longer numb.
- After the test, your throat may be slightly sore. If so, you may soothe it with cold drinks and lozenges once the hour has passed).
- Be sure to report unusual symptoms, such as difficulty in swallowing, shortness of breath, chest pain, bleeding or fever.