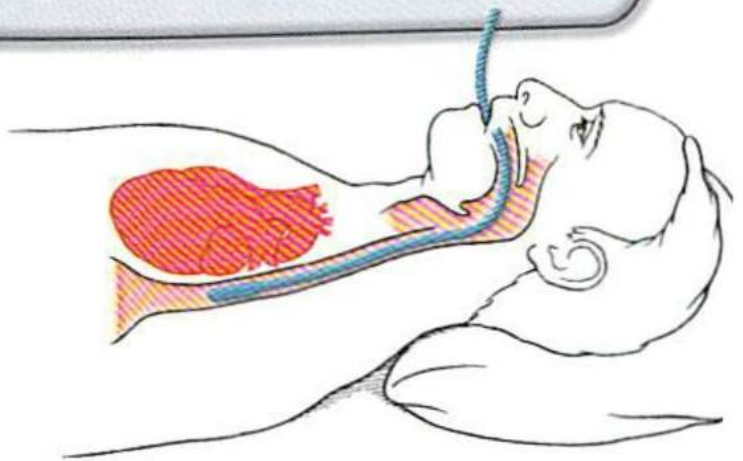


Transesophageal Echo (TEE)



A Patient's Guide

What Is a TEE?

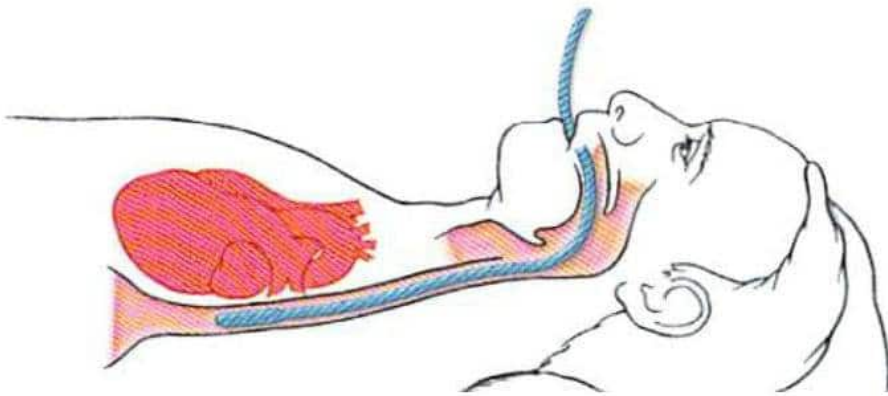
A transesophageal echocardiogram, or **TEE**, is a procedure that uses ultrasound waves to examine the heart. Unlike a standard **echocardiogram** (or echo), which is done from outside the chest, a TEE is done from inside the **esophagus** (the tube leading from the mouth to the stomach).

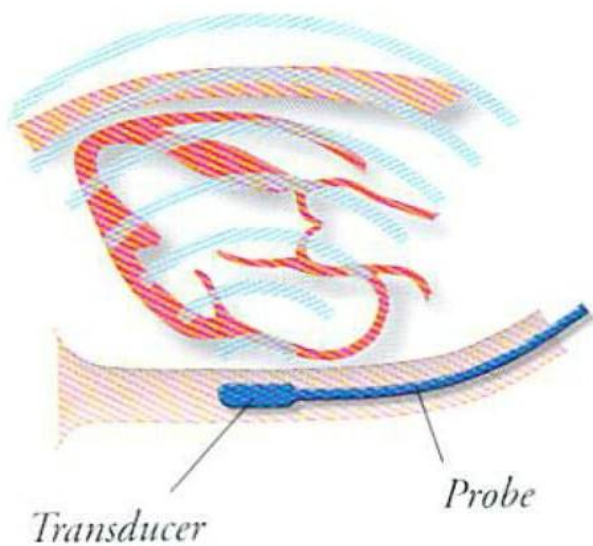
Because the esophagus lies just behind the heart, the TEE provides much clearer images of the heart than a standard echo test.

How Does a TEE Work?

A long flexible tube, called a **probe**, is inserted into the mouth and down the esophagus. The probe is about as wide as your little finger and has a small microphone-like device, called a **transducer**, at the tip. The transducer sends ultrasound waves that bounce off the various parts of the heart.

The transducer then picks up the reflected waves and sends them to a computer. The computer turns the echoes into moving images of the heart.





The images show the actual shape and motion of the different parts of the heart. They also show the flow of blood through the heart chambers and valves. The images are displayed on a monitor screen, and they can also be recorded on video.

Why Is a TEE Done?

A TEE is usually done when doctors want to examine hard-to-see structures (parts) of the heart. Here are a few reasons why a TEE may be done:

- to detect blood clots or masses inside the heart
- to assess how serious some valve defects are
- 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
- to obtain clearer images than a standard echo would give (such as in people who are obese or have chronic lung disease)

Preparing for the Procedure

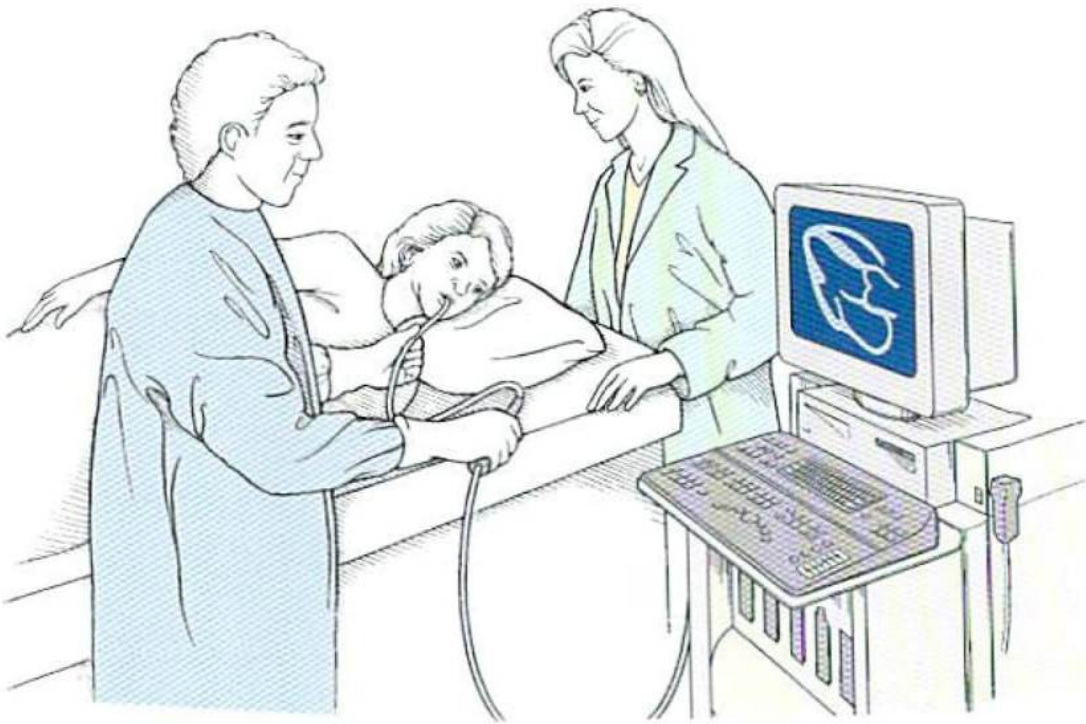
- Do not eat or drink for 6 hours before the procedure, to make sure that your stomach is empty. If you have diabetes and take medication for it, ask for special instructions.
- Have someone drive you to the hospital or clinic. Also, arrange to have someone drive you home afterwards. Do not plan to drive yourself home, as you may be drowsy.
- Tell the doctor if you have any conditions involving your esophagus or stomach, or if you have a problem swallowing.
- Also, tell the doctor or nurse if you have allergies to any medications, especially sedatives (medications that help you relax).
- The TEE procedure, potential benefits, and possible risks will be explained to you. Feel free to ask questions. You will then be asked to sign a consent form.
- If you wear dentures or oral prostheses, you will need to remove them, as they can interfere with the test.
- An intravenous (IV) line will be inserted into a vein in your arm, to allow injection of drugs, such as sedatives or antibiotics.

What Happens During the Procedure?

The TEE is done at a hospital, clinic, or test center, often as an outpatient procedure. When you arrive for the test, you will change into a hospital gown, and then you will be taken to the procedure room.

You will be asked to lie on your left side. Your throat will be sprayed with an anesthetic to numb it. You may be given a low dose of a sedative through the IV line in your arm to help you relax. You may also be given antibiotics to help prevent an infection.

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. The procedure is generally not painful, however.



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 side-ways. 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 used to clear secretions from your mouth. You may also be given oxygen.

The procedure itself usually takes 15 to 20 minutes. However, you should allow about two hours from your arrival to the time you can leave.

After Your TEE

- If you are given a sedative, have someone drive you home. Do not drive for 12 hours.
- Do not eat or drink until your throat is no longer numb. This takes about an hour.
- After the procedure, your throat may be sore. If so, you may soothe it with cold drinks and lozenges (once the hour has passed).
- Call your doctor if you have any symptoms, such as trouble swallowing, shortness of breath, chest pain, bleeding, or fever.



Is the TEE Safe?

The TEE involves inserting a probe into your body; therefore it has some risk. The *risk is small*, however, and the TEE is considered a relatively safe procedure.

Possible complications may include abnormal heart rhythms, breathing problems, infection of the heart valves, reaction to sedatives, and bleeding. *Rarely*, the probe may perforate (pierce) the esophagus. To learn about your particular risk, talk with your doctor.

What Are the Benefits?

The TEE provides images of the heart that are often much clearer than those of a standard echo test. The information gained from the procedure helps your doctor make an accurate diagnosis of your condition and develop the treatment plan that is best for you.

Your Test Results

The doctor performing the procedure may be able to give you preliminary results before you leave. Your own doctor will discuss the final results with you during a future office visit.

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