

Transesophageal Echocardiogram (TEE)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is TEE?

A TEE is a test that takes a picture of the heart with the use of a flexible probe placed inside the food pipe (esophagus). The heart is adjacent to the esophagus and an ultrasound allows doctors to get very clear pictures of parts of the heart that are not well seen by a transthoracic echocardiogram (taken from outside the chest wall). The pictures are displayed on the ultrasound machine monitor and are recorded on disk. At UHN, the TEE is performed and interpreted by a cardiologist.

The TEE is valuable in the assessment of:

- severity of valve disease and whether or not it can be surgically repaired
- function of prosthetic heart valves
- infection of the valves (endocarditis)
- presence of blood clots (thrombus) or masses within the heart
- holes or defects between the heart chambers
- tears in the main artery coming from the heart (aorta)

The expected stay in the Echolab is approximately 3-4 hours.

What preparation is necessary for the TEE?

If you are scheduled for a TEE, you must have NOTHING to eat or drink from midnight the night before the procedure. Medications can be taken with a sip of water unless you are instructed by your doctor not to.

Sedation is given during the TEE. For your safety, the test will not be done unless you are accompanied by someone who you have arranged to take you home.

Bring your UHN hospital card and a valid health card when you come for your test. Providing a list of medications you take can also be useful.

What happens on the day of the test?

Before the test:

- A receptionist will ask for your hospital and health cards. If you do not have a hospital card, you will be asked to go to Patient Registration located on the ground floor of the Eaton Wing to get one.
- You will be given a brief list of questions to answer regarding your medical history and medications.
- A sonographer will escort you to a change room where you will be asked to remove all clothing from the waist up off. A patient gown will be provided. Please leave your valuables with the person who has come with you for the test.

- You will be taken into the procedure room.

During the test:

- The sonographer may perform a transthoracic echo.
- The doctor will give an explanation of the test, including the benefits and possible risks. Feel free to ask questions if you have any.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form.
- Monitors will be attached to you to record your heart rate, heart rhythm, blood pressure and blood oxygen level during the test.
- A needle will be inserted into an arm vein to give you medications to help you relax (sedation).
- A small amount of oxygen will be given during the test.
- You will be asked to remove any dentures.
- A local anaesthetic (xylocaine) will be sprayed to the back of your throat to numb it. You will also be given a liquid form of xylocaine to gargle.
- You will be asked to lie on your left side.
- The doctor will slowly pass the probe through your mouth and into the esophagus. You may feel some pressure and discomfort as the probe is being directed into position but it is generally not painful.
- Once the probe is in position, the doctor will take pictures of your heart. The sonographer will assist in operating the ultrasound machine.

After the test:

- After the probe is removed, you will stay in lab until you recover from the sedation.
- Your throat will still be frozen/numb so you should have nothing to eat or drink for at least 2 hours after the TEE. After that time, you should start by slowly taking sips of liquid. Make sure that you feel the liquid going down your throat properly. If you do not feel the liquid, wait 30 minutes and try again.
- Do not drive or operate heavy machinery for the remainder of the day. Arrange in advance for someone take you home.
- The report will be sent to the doctor who requested the TEE and he/she will discuss the results with you at a later time.

Contact Us:

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