



Grand Rapids Cardiology

What to Expect

Transesophageal Echocardiogram (TEE)

What is a Transesophageal Echocardiogram (TEE)?

A TEE is a test which uses a flexible tube that produces ultrasound waves to create pictures of the heart from inside of the esophagus and stomach. Sound waves are transmitted from an instrument, called a transducer probe, into your body. The sound waves reflect (echo) off the tissues and organs to create pictures which can be seen on a screen.

When can a TEE be useful?

The TEE provides very clear pictures of the heart structures and blood flow. The pictures are usually clearer than those obtained from a standard echocardiogram, which is performed from the chest wall. This test is often used to view hard-to-see structures or to obtain more detailed pictures of the heart and aorta.

Common reasons for the test include measuring the size and pumping strength of the heart and looking at the shape and motion of the heart valves. This test may also be used to look for fluid around the heart and blood clots or masses inside of the heart or aorta.

Is a TEE safe?

The risks associated with having a TEE are small. Possible complications include pneumonia and abnormal heart rhythms. Very rarely, there may be some bleeding from the esophagus, a hole in the stomach or esophagus, or depressed breathing.

How should I prepare for the test?

Do not eat or drink for 6 hours before the test.

Tell your doctor or nurse if you have a problem with swallowing or a history of esophagus or stomach conditions.

Tell your doctor or nurse if you have any allergies to medicines, especially medicines that make you relax.

If you are coming into the hospital for this test, please bring someone to drive you home.

How is the test performed?

A blood pressure cuff will be placed on your arm. Small sticky patches, called electrodes, will be placed on your chest. An oxygen transducer will be placed on your finger to measure the amount of oxygen in your body. Your heart rhythm, blood pressure, oxygen levels, and breathing will be monitored during the test.



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You will be given oxygen. An intravenous line (or IV) will be placed into a vein in your arm.

A local anesthetic will be sprayed to numb the back of your throat. Medicine will be given through your IV to help you relax and feel sleepy.

The doctor will gently insert the probe into your mouth. As you swallow, the probe will be directed into your esophagus. You may feel the probe moving, but it is generally not painful. When the probe is positioned in the esophagus just behind the heart, pictures of the heart will be taken.

The preparation and test together will take approximately 1 hour.

What about after the test?

The nurse will give you instructions about when you may eat or drink.

Your throat may feel slightly sore for about one day. When you can start drinking, soothe your throat with cold liquids and lozenges.

Do not drive for 12 hours.

Avoid alcoholic beverages for 12 hours.

How will I find out the test results?

A cardiologist will read the test and report the results to your doctor. Your doctor will inform you of the test results.

If you need to reschedule the test or have any questions regarding these instructions, please call our office at 616-717-5141.