Transesophageal echocardiogram (TEE)

A transesophageal echocardiogram (TRANS-ee-soff-oh-JEE-ul EK-oh-CARD-ee-oh-gram), or TEE, is a test that takes pictures of your child’s heart with a transducer, a device that produces sound waves. During a TEE, a healthcare provider guides a thin tube with a transducer down your child’s throat and into the esophagus. This allows your child’s healthcare provider to take more detailed pictures of your child’s heart.

Why does my child need a TEE?
Your child may need a TEE if:
• The healthcare provider can’t do a standard echocardiogram.
• The standard echocardiogram produced poor images.
• Their healthcare provider needs highly detailed pictures of your child’s heart.
• Your child is having open heart surgery or a cardiac cath procedure.

What does a TEE do?
A TEE may show a healthcare provider:
• Your child’s heart chambers’ size and structure.
• The path of blood flow in congenital (present at birth) heart defects.
• The amount of blood the heart can pump.
• How well the heart valves and blood vessels are working.
• Blood clots or tumors in the heart.

How can I prepare for my child’s TEE?
You can prepare your child for their TEE by:
• Have your child stop eating or drinking about 6 hours before the test (or as the healthcare provider instructs).
• Tell your child’s healthcare provider all medicine your child takes, including over-the-counter drugs and supplements, and bring a list to the hospital.
• Tell your child’s healthcare provider if your child is allergic to local anesthetics, latex, or any medicine.
• Tell your child’s healthcare provider if your child has esophagus problems like bleeding or tightness or trouble swallowing and breathing.
• Make sure someone can take care of other children if needed or drive your child to and from the hospital.
What happens on the day of the TEE?
After you fill out paperwork, a healthcare provider will take your child to a room with an exam table and ultrasound equipment.

- Your child will take off their clothes above the waist, put on a hospital gown, and lie on their back or side on the bed.
- A healthcare provider will attach electrodes to your child’s chest.
- Your child will receive an IV (small tube that goes into the vein) and get medicine through the IV to help them relax and sleep during the test.
- A healthcare provider will put a blood pressure cuff on your child’s arm and clip on their finger to monitor blood pressure during the test.
- Your child may have oxygen during the test if they need it.

What happens during a TEE?
A healthcare provider may numb your child’s throat with a throat spray, gel, or liquid so they don’t feel pain during the test. They may also give your child a bite guard to protect their teeth during the TEE.

The healthcare provider will then put a small, flexible tube (endoscope) down your child’s throat and into the esophagus. They will use the transducer to take ultrasound pictures of your child’s heart. This usually takes 10–45 minutes.

What happens after the TEE?
At the end of the test, healthcare providers will remove the probe and IV. They will move your child to a patient room to recover and continue to watch your child until the sedative wears off (they begin to wake up).

- Have your child wait to eat or drink until the feeling comes back in their throat, usually 1–2 hours. Start with liquids and soft foods such as gelatin, pudding, or soup.
- Your child may feel weak or tired for the rest of the day. Watch them carefully as they walk or climb stairs.
- Your child might have a sore throat for a few days after the test. If the pain continues, have your child gargle with warm water or use cough drops.
- Your child’s healthcare provider will contact you to tell you about the test results or set up a follow up appointment.

When should I call my child’s healthcare provider?
Call your child’s healthcare provider if your child has problems after the test, including:

- Pain or bleeding
- Trouble swallowing more than 4 hours afterward
- Nausea, mouth, or throat discomfort from the transducer that doesn’t go away

Notes

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