



Patient & Family Guide  
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# Transesophageal Echocardiogram (TEE)



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## What is a Transesophageal Echocardiogram (TEE)?

- This test uses an ultrasound machine to take pictures of your heart.
- The pictures show the size and shape of your heart, its movement, and how blood flows through it.
- During this test, a flexible tube is passed through your mouth, down your throat, and into your esophagus (swallowing tube that connects your mouth and stomach). There is a special probe on the end of the tube.
- The probe lets us get clearer pictures of your heart than with a regular echocardiogram.
- You will be given medications to help you relax and let the probe pass down your throat.

## If you are an outpatient:

- › **To get ready for this test, you must follow the detailed instructions on pages 2 to 3 of this guide.**

## **Who will do the test?**

The test will be done by a cardiologist (heart specialist), with the help of a cardiac sonographer (heart ultrasound specialist) and a nurse. Sometimes a resident doctor also helps.

## **If you are an outpatient:**

TEEs are done at 2 different sites. Please make sure you know which site your test is at:

### Halifax Infirmary:

- › Register at the kiosk, Summer Street entrance.
- › Go to level 4, Minor Procedures Clinic to get ready for your test.
- › You will then be taken to the Echo Lab for your test.

### Dartmouth General:

- › Report to Patient Registration, main entrance.

## **How do I get ready for the test?**

- **Do not** eat or drink anything for 6 hours before your test.
- If you are taking medications, you may take them with a small amount of water.
- **If you take insulin for diabetes:**
  - › Your doctor will tell you how to take your insulin on the day of the test.
  - › 3 weekdays before your test date, call the doctor who arranged the test for insulin instructions.
- **If you take the blood thinners warfarin or coumadin:**
  - › You will need a blood test to check your INR the day before your test.
  - › If your TEE is on a Monday, have your blood test on the Friday before.

## How is the test done?

- You will be asked to gargle with a solution that will freeze your throat and take away your gag response.
- A spray may be used instead of, or in addition to, the gargle solution.
- You will be given medication with a needle to help you to relax and make you drowsy. It will not put you completely to sleep.
- You will be asked to wear a plastic mouth guard. The doctor will then pass the probe through the mouth guard into your mouth, down your throat, and into your esophagus.
- We will ask you to swallow to help move the probe down your throat.
- Once the probe is in the right place, the doctor will be able to see your heart on the computer screen. They will use the computer to take measurements and look at your heart.
- The test will take about 60 minutes (1 hour).

## What will happen after the test?

### If you are an outpatient:

- You will be taken back to the area where you registered. You will be monitored for about 1 hour after the test.
- **Do not** have anything to eat or drink until your throat is no longer frozen and your gag response has come back. This will be about 2 to 3 hours after your test.

- **A responsible adult must take you home and stay with you until you are no longer drowsy.**
- **You cannot travel home by bus or taxi.**
- You must not drive a car, operate dangerous equipment, or make any important decisions for 24 hours (1 day) after your test. The freezing solution can affect your reflexes and reaction time.

