

TRANSESOPHAGEAL ECHOCARDIOGRAPHY

This test involves viewing the heart with an ultrasound transducer (a sensor that picks up sound waves) positioned very near the heart within the esophagus. Although similar to plain echocardiography, transesophageal echocardiography provides views of the back of the heart, better definition of its interior structures, and the best view of blood clots in the heart chambers. It is sometimes used to look for blood clots in the heart prior to electrical conversion of certain abnormal heart rhythms to a regular heart beat. It also is useful for obese patients or those who have thick chest walls, whose hearts are difficult to visualize with standard echocardiography. In addition, it may be used to monitor heart function during surgery.

Procedure:

- You may be given a mild sedative to relieve anxiety and to decrease movement.
- Next, a local *anesthetic* (a numbing medicine) is sprayed on the back of your throat to reduce the gag reflex.
- Then an *endoscope* (a long, thin, flexible plastic tube) containing the ultrasound transducer is passed through the mouth and throat and into the esophagus.
- During the test, the transducer may be repositioned at different sites in the esophagus.

Risks:

- There is a small risk of bleeding or infection caused by introducing the scope into the esophagus.
- Rarely, the scope may cause perforation, or rupture of the esophagus.
- It is common to have a sore throat for a short time following the procedure.