

Greenwich Hospital

What is t-PA for Treatment of Stroke

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

What is an ischemic stroke?

Ischemia is a lack of blood flow to a part of the body. An ischemic stroke or cerebral vascular accident (CVA) is a life-threatening medical emergency in which the brain's vital supply of blood and oxygen is disrupted. Some strokes are due to a clot that interrupts blood flow to an area of the brain causing neurological symptoms such as problems talking, visual disturbances, weakness (especially on one side of the body), and slurring of speech. The longer the clot is present, the more damage is done to the brain. The sooner the brain is treated after the stroke, the more brain tissue can be saved.

What is t-PA treatment?

In some situations, a medication called t-PA (tissue plasminogen activator) is given **within three hours** of symptoms to help dissolve the clot and restore blood flow to the brain. This makes it very important for people who think they are having a stroke to seek immediate medical attention. This is the only FDA-approved treatment for acute ischemic stroke. t-PA has been shown to help some people recover from stroke.

How is t-PA given?

t-PA is given as a single intravenous dose over one hour. If you receive t-PA, you will be admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and monitored for 24 hours. You will then be transferred to a medical unit and cared for by nurses specially trained in stroke care. The doctors and nurses on the stroke unit will oversee your treatment and keep your family informed of your progress.

Are there any risks associated with t-PA?

In some people, t-PA can cause serious bleeding. Certain patients are at higher risk for bleeding and therefore do not qualify for t-PA. Approximately 1 person in 17 will suffer serious bleeding in the brain. If this occurs, there is a 60% chance of dying within the next 30 days. If bleeding does occur, treatment will be started to help stop the bleeding.

For patients who qualify to receive t-PA, the benefit is greater than the risk.

How can I get more information about t-PA and strokes?

Below are several numbers you and your family may find helpful during your hospital stay. The website address for the American Heart Association is also listed where you can find more information regarding strokes:

Greenwich Hospital Operator: 203-863-3533

Medical/Surgical Intensive Care Unit 203-863-3533

Cardiac Telemetry/Intermediate Care Unit: 203-863-3566

Medicine Unit: 203-863-3547

American Heart Association: www.americanheart.org

Sources: Frederick Nahm, MD, PhD
American Heart Association. Retrieved August 2005 from www.americanheart.org

For more Patient Fact Sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at www.greenhosp.org and Click on Patients & Visitors, then Patient Education