

# Tissue Plasminogen Activator (tPA)

## What You Should Know

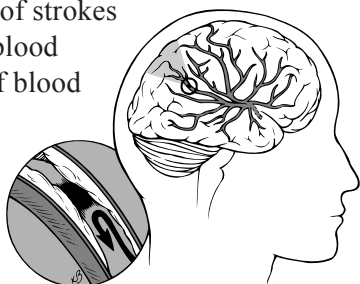


### What is tPA?

tPA is a medication that dissolves blood clots. It is called a thrombolytic agent or more commonly referred to as the “clot buster.” It is an intravenous or IV medication usually given through a catheter inserted into a vein in the arm.

### What type of stroke is IV tPA used for?

It was approved by the FDA in 1996 to treat ischemic type strokes. About 8 out of 10 brain attacks/strokes are ischemic. These types of strokes are most often caused by blood clots that block the flow of blood to the brain causing tissue death. tPA is given to help dissolve the clot quickly and restore the blood flow to the brain tissue.



The other common type of brain attack is called a hemorrhagic stroke. This brain attack/stroke is due to bleeding from a blood vessel into the brain. tPA is not used with this type of brain attack because it could increase the amount of bleeding and possibly cause more damage to the brain.

A CT scan or MRI of the head is done to confirm there is no bleeding in the brain before tPA is given.

### When is tPA used?

tPA has been approved to treat brain attacks in the first three hours following the onset of symptoms. If given promptly, 1 in 3 patients who receive tPA resolve their symptoms or have major improvement in their stroke symptoms.

### What are the risks of tPA?

Bleeding (hemorrhage), in the brain or in other parts of the body, is the most common risk that can occur. In 6 out of 100 patients, bleeding may occur into the brain and cause further injury. For 1 of these 6 patients it may cause death or long term serious disability.

### Should everyone receive tPA therapy?

Unfortunately the answer is no. Persons who cannot be treated within three hours of their first symptom, patients with certain medical conditions, and patients with certain types of strokes will not qualify for this treatment.

### Inform your physician if you have had any of the following:

- Recent heart attack
- Serious head trauma within the last three months
- Bleeding from the stomach or urinary tract within the last 21 days
- Major surgery within previous 14 days
- Bleeding disorders
- Use of blood thinners, such as warfarin
- Pregnancy
- Uncontrolled high blood pressure

Adapted from OSF Saint Francis Medical Center, Form No 966-0041

For additional information go to: [www.giveme5forstroke.com](http://www.giveme5forstroke.com)