



Information for You from Your Health Care Team

TPA Tissue Plasminogen Activator

What is TPA?

- TPA is a medicine used to dissolve blood clots that can occur in the brain cause by a stroke. This medicine was approved by the FDA in 1996.
- TPA is given IV (intravenous) by placing a catheter into a vein in the arm.

Should everyone receive TPA?

No, everyone can not receive TPA.

- TPA needs to be given within the first 3 hours of the first symptom of a stroke.
- People who have certain medical conditions can not have TPA.
- Certain types of stroke can not be treated with TPA.

What you need to tell the doctor before receiving TPA

Tell your doctor if you have any of the following

- Head injury within the last 3 months.
- Recent heart attack.
- Take medicines know as “blood thinners” aspirin, plavix, or warfarin (Coumadin®).
- Any stomach (ulcer), urinary tract bleeding, or any other bleeding disorders.
- Surgery within the last 14 days.
- Are pregnant or think you might be pregnant.
- High blood pressure.

How TPA is used for Stroke Patients

There are 2 types of strokes:

- **Ischemic Stroke**
This type of stroke is caused by a blood clot in an artery in the brain. The blood clot blocks the flow of blood to the brain causing the brain cells to die. This is the

most common type of stroke. About 8 out of 10 or 80% of strokes are ischemic strokes.

- **Hemorrhagic Stroke**

This type of stroke is caused when a vessel in the brain ruptures or breaks open causing bleeding into the brain. TPA is not given for this type of stroke.

When does the doctor use TPA?

- First a CT or MRI of the brain is done to make sure there is no bleeding in the brain. A CT and MRI are types of x-rays.
- The doctor must make sure when the symptoms of the stroke first started. TPA is approved to treat strokes in the first 3 hours following the onset of symptoms. It is very important the doctor know when the last time the patient was seen in their normal state of health.
- Once the doctor determines that the stroke is ischemic and the time frame is within 3 hours the TPA can be given. If given within the time frame 1 in 3 patients resolve their symptoms or have a major improvement in their stroke symptoms.

Side effects of TPA

- Bleeding in the brain or other parts of the body is the most common side effect. If this happens it can cause further injury that can result in death or serious disability.
- Gastrointestinal bleeding
- Genitourinary bleeding
- Bleeding from a puncture site
- Cerebral edema which is swelling of the brain
- Cerebral herniation
- New ischemic stroke
- Bruising
- Fever
- Hypotension which is low blood pressure

Speak up if you have any questions or concerns

References:

Adams, HP Jr., del Zoppo, G., Alberts, MJ., and et al. (2007). Guidelines for the early management of adults with ischemic stroke: a guideline from the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association Stroke Council, Clinical Cardiology Council, Cardiovascular Radiology and Intervention Council, and the Atherosclerotic Peripheral Vascular Disease and Quality of Care Outcomes in Research Interdisciplinary Working Groups: the American Academy of Neurology affirms the value of this guideline as an educational tool for neurologists. *Circulation*, 115, e478-e534.

For additional information go to: www.giveme5forstroke.com

