

What is t-PA Treatment for Stroke?

What is an ischemic stroke?

Ischemia is a lack of blood flow to a part of the body. An ischemic stroke, or brain attack, is a life-threatening medical emergency caused by a clot that is blocking one of the blood vessels that supplies blood to a part of your brain. If left untreated, it can result in significant disability or even death. The longer the clot is present, the more damage is done to the brain. Early treatment of ischemic stroke may result in more brain tissue that can be saved.

What is t-PA treatment?

In some situations, a medication called t-PA (tissue plasminogen activator) is given to help dissolve the clot and restore blood flow to the brain. There may be no benefit immediately after infusion, but there is 30% more likelihood of having minimal or no disability 3 months after t-PA treatment.

Are there any risks associated with t-PA?

Treatment with t-PA also carries serious risks of bleeding.

- There is a 10-times increased risk of symptomatic intracranial hemorrhage (bleeding in the brain) after t-PA
- There is a 9-times increased risk of dying from intracranial hemorrhage after t-PA, but overall mortality at 3 months is no different after t-PA compared to those who are not treated.

Currently, there are no other FDA-approved or demonstrated effective medications to treat this type of stroke. If you agree to take t-PA, you may improve, stay the same, or worsen. The improvement you may experience is not immediate and may take a long time (3 to 6 months) to be noticeable.

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 will oversee your treatment and keep your family informed of your progress.

For patients who qualify to receive t-PA, the benefit is greater than the risk. Danbury Hospital is a primary stroke center with experience in treating patients with t-PA.

Source:
American Stroke Association @ www.strokeassociation.org

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