

Stroke medications



Thrombolysis/Alteplase (tPa)

What Is It?

Alteplase is a medicine that can dissolve blood clots. An ischemic stroke is caused by clots that block blood flow to the brain. Alteplase can help treat a stroke if it is given very shortly after stroke symptoms begin. Before giving this medicine, your doctor will decide if the medicine may work for you based on:

- Your age.
- Your condition.
- Other factors.

Tell your doctor about:

- Any allergies you have.
- All medicines you are taking.
- Any medical conditions you have.
- Any blood disorders you have.
- Any bleeding in the last 21 days, including bleeding in the stomach or the vagina.
- Any surgeries you have had.
- Whether you are pregnant or may be pregnant.
- The time your symptoms started.

What are the risks?

Generally, this is a safe treatment. However, problems may happen, including:

- Bleeding in the brain.
- Bleeding in other parts of the body.
- Allergic reactions to the medicine.

What happens before the procedure?

- Your doctor will do an exam.
- Your doctor will check your body temperature, blood pressure, heart rate, and breathing.
- Medicines may be given to adjust your blood pressure, if needed.
- You may have tests, such as:
 - Blood tests.
 - A head scan (CT scan).

What happens during the procedure?

- An IV will be put into one of your veins.
- Alteplase will be given to you through the IV.
- In some cases, this medicine may be given directly to the affected area through a thin tube (catheter). This is usually put in at the top of your leg.
- Your health care team will closely watch your:
 - Blood pressure.
 - Heart rate.
 - Breathing.
- Your doctor will check often to see how well the medicine is working.
- If the medicine causes bleeding, it will be stopped. Another treatment will be started.

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What can I expect after the treatment?

- You will be watched closely in the ICU or the stroke unit.
- You will be checked by several specialists, including speech therapists, physical therapists, and occupational therapists.
- If you had a catheter, you may have:
 - Bruising.
 - Soreness.
 - Swelling.
- It may take days, weeks, or months to fully see how well your body responded to the treatment.

Follow these instructions in the hospital:

Activity

- **Do not** get out of bed without help.
- This is for your safety.
- Limit activity after your treatment.
- Do stroke rehab programs as told by your doctor.

General instructions

- Take over-the-counter and prescription medicines only as told by your doctor.
- Tell a nurse or doctor right away if you have any bleeding, bruising, or injuries.
- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush. Brush your teeth gently.

Summary

- Alteplase is a medicine that can break up blood clots. Blood clots can cause a stroke.
- This medicine may help if you get it as soon as possible after your stroke symptoms start.
- You will be watched closely in the ICU or the stroke unit.
- Get help right away if you are showing signs of increased bleeding or are having symptoms of stroke.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

Get help right away if you have:

- ▲ A sudden, severe headache with no known cause
- ▲ Nausea or vomiting occurring with another symptom
- ▲ Sudden weakness or numbness of your face, arm or leg, especially on one side of your body
- ▲ Sudden trouble walking or difficulty moving your arms or legs
- ▲ Sudden confusion