

Stroke treatments



Mechanical Thrombectomy

Mechanical thrombectomy is a procedure to treat an ischemic stroke. This type of stroke is caused by a blood clot in an artery in your brain. The clot blocks the blood supply to your brain.

This is a medical emergency. It must be treated right away.

Tell a doctor about:

- Any allergies you have.
- All medicines you are taking. Tell him or her about blood thinners, heart medicines, vitamins, herbs, and over-the-counter medicines.
- Any problems you or family members have had with anesthetic medicines.
- Any blood disorders you have.
- Any surgeries you have had.
- Any medical conditions you have.
- Whether you are pregnant or may be pregnant.

What are the risks?

- This is generally a safe treatment, but problems may occur. These can include:
- Bleeding.
- Allergic reactions to medicines or dyes.
- Infection.
- Damage to other structures or organs.
- Tearing of the blood vessel that has the clot.
- The stroke getting worse.
- Having another stroke.

What happens before the procedure?

- You may have a CT scan or an MRI scan of the brain.
- Your doctor will:
 - Do a physical exam.
 - Ask about your medical history.
- Ask your doctor what steps will be taken to help prevent the spread of germs. These may include washing skin with a germ-killing soap.
- An IV tube will be put into one of your veins.
- You may be given a medicine to dissolve the blood clot (*IV alteplase*). This may be given within the first few hours of a stroke. It may also be given during the procedure.

What happens during the procedure?

- You will be given one or more of the following through the IV tube:
 - A medicine to help you relax (sedative).
 - A medicine to numb the area (local anesthetic).
 - A medicine to make you fall asleep (general anesthetic).
- Your doctor will make a small cut (*incision*) in your upper thigh area to find a large artery.
- A long, thin tube (*catheter*) will be put into the artery. The tube will be passed up toward your brain.

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- An imaging test (*angiogram*) will be done to find the exact spot in your brain to place the catheter.
- A wire-like basket (*stent retriever*) will be extended from the catheter to remove the blood clot. In some cases, your doctor may also use a suction tool.
- Your doctor will take out the catheter.
- You will have a bandage (*dressing*) placed where the catheter was inserted.

The procedure may vary among doctors and hospitals.

What can I expect after the procedure?

- You will be watched closely in an intensive care unit or a stroke unit.
- You will be assessed by specialists. They will check your speech and movement.
- After the treatment, it is common to have bruising, soreness, or swelling in the area where the catheter was put in.

Follow these instructions at home:

Catheter insertion site care

- Follow instructions from your doctor about how to take care of your insertion site. Make sure you:
 - Wash your hands with soap and water before and after you change your bandage. If you cannot use soap and water, use hand sanitizer.
 - Change your bandage as told by your doctor.

- Check the site every day for signs of infection. Check for:
 - More redness, swelling, or pain.
 - Fluid or blood.
 - Warmth.
 - Pus or a bad smell.
- For the first 2–3 days after your procedure, or as long as told:
 - Avoid climbing stairs as much as possible.
 - **Do not** squat.
- Limit activity as told by your doctor.

General instructions

- Take over-the-counter and prescription medicines only as told by your doctor.
- **Do not** use any products that contain nicotine or tobacco. These products include cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and chewing tobacco. If you need help quitting, ask your doctor.
- Keep all follow-up visits as told by your doctor. This is important.

Contact a doctor if:

- You have more redness, swelling, or pain around your insertion site.
- You have a fever.

Summary

- Mechanical thrombectomy is a procedure to treat an ischemic stroke. This type of stroke is caused by a blood clot in an artery in the brain.
- A stroke is a medical emergency. It must be treated right away.
- Once you return home, take all medicines only as told by your doctor.

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- Get help right away if you have symptoms of a stroke.
- **Do not** lift anything that is heavier than 10 lb (4.5 kg), or the limit that you are told, until your doctor says that it is safe.

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