Your health care team will talk with you and your family about the decision to treat the stroke with t-PA. You will need to weigh the benefits and risks.

We understand that this is a very stressful time, but the decision to give t-PA must be made as soon as possible.

What happens during a stroke?

- A stroke occurs when blood flow to an area of the brain is interrupted.
- 9 out of 10 strokes are caused by a blood clot blocking a blood vessel in the brain or leading to the brain. This is called an ischemic stroke.
- The clot prevents brain cells from getting the blood and oxygen they need, so they begin to die. This damages that part of the brain and may lead to disability or even death.
- The longer the brain cells go without oxygen, the more damage is done to the brain and to the patient.

Please visit the UHN Patient Education website for more health information: www.uhnpatienteducation.ca

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**What is t-PA? How does it help?**

- t-PA (tissue plasminogen activator) is a medicine that dissolves the blood clot causing the stroke. It is commonly called a “clot buster”. Dissolving the clot may restore blood flow to the brain.
- t-PA is given through an intravenous (IV) line, which takes about 1 hour.
- Treatment should be started within 4 ½ hours of an acute stroke. The sooner t-PA is started the better because for each minute that passes more brain becomes irreversibly damaged. If too much time passes or if the brain imaging shows that there is already too much damage then t-PA will not help. It can cause more harm.

**What are the possible risks and benefits of treating stroke with t-PA?**

**Benefits:**

- t-PA greatly improves the chance of making a good and sometimes a complete recovery from a stroke. But, t-PA is not always successful in opening the clot.

**Risks:**

- t-PA may cause bleeding. If bleeding occurs in the brain it can cause serious damage, and may result in death.

It is not possible to predict what will happen with any individual patient.

The health care team will talk with you and your family about the decision to treat the stroke with t-PA.