Tissue Plasminogen Activator (tPA)
What You Should Know

What is tPA?
tPA is a drug that dissolves blood clots. It is used to help reduce the effects of a stroke.

What type of stroke is tPA used for?
tPA is used to treat ischemic strokes which are caused by blood clots. The blood clot is formed in one part of the body and then travels to a smaller blood vessel in the brain. It blocks the blood flow to that part of the brain. Close to 80% of all strokes are ischemic. For strokes of this nature, tPA can help dissolve the clot quickly.

When is TPA used?
In 1996, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the use of tPA to treat stroke in the first three hours after the onset of symptoms. It is now considered acceptable to treat stroke in certain people up to 4 ½ hours after the symptoms start. This means that if you think you are having a stroke get help right away. If given promptly, tPA can reduce the effects of stroke and reduce damage.

Can everyone use tPA?
No. You may not be able to receive tPA if you have had:
- Recent heart attack
- Head trauma within the last three months
- Blood in your stools or urine within the last 21 days
- Surgery within the last 14 days
- Bleeding problems
- Use of blood thinners, such as Coumadin®
- Pregnancy
- High blood pressure

What are the risks of tPA?
Bleeding is the most common risk. The bleeding can occur in the brain or elsewhere in the body.