



Towson University ♥ St. Joseph Medical Center
Wellness Center

STROKE TREATMENT

What are accepted ways to treat stroke?

Surgery, medications, hospital care and rehabilitation are all accepted stroke treatments.

When the carotid artery in the neck is partially blocked by a fatty buildup, called plaque, surgery called carotid endarterectomy might be used to remove the accumulated plaque.

Cerebral angioplasty is another technique in which balloons, stents and coils are used to treat some types of problems with the brain's blood vessels. Its widespread use depends on its safety and effectiveness.

What about tissue plasminogen activator (tPA)?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the clot-dissolving drug tissue plasminogen activator (tPA) to treat strokes caused by blood clots. (Blood clots cause about 80 percent of all strokes.) tPA dissolves the clot and restores blood flow to the brain. tPA carries a risk of bleeding in the brain, but its benefits outweigh the risks when an experienced doctor uses it properly.

Not every stroke patient, particularly those having a hemorrhagic stroke, should be treated with tPA. That's why it's extremely important to determine the type of stroke very quickly. tPA is effective only if given promptly. For maximum benefit, the therapy must be started within three hours of the onset of stroke symptoms. That's why it's so critical that medical professionals and the public recognize stroke as a medical emergency and respond immediately.

What about treating heart disease?

Sometimes treating a stroke means treating the heart. The reason is that various kinds of heart disease can contribute to stroke risk. For example, damaged heart valves may need to be surgically treated or treated with anti-clotting drugs to reduce the chance of clots forming around them. Blood clots can also form in hearts with atrial fibrillation. This is a type of abnormal heart rhythm called an arrhythmia. If clots form in the heart or on the valves, there's a chance they can travel to the brain and cause a stroke.

For stroke information, call the American Stroke Association at 1-888-4-STROKE.