

Ischemic Stroke Treatment: *tPA* Decision Guide

What is an ischemic stroke?

Your arteries bring blood to the brain. An ischemic stroke occurs when the blood flow to part of your brain is blocked by a blood clot. When this happens, brain cells begin to die — as many as **2 million every minute**.

For patients who survive a stroke, some will get better on their own while others may get worse. There is one FDA-approved treatment for stroke — tPA (alteplase or Activase) — a “clot-busting” medicine injected through an intravenous line (called an IV).

How can tPA help?

tPA works best when given as soon as possible after stroke symptoms begin. It can reverse the stroke and return patients to normal. For some patients, it might take months to see the benefits.

Are there risks with tPA?

Treatment with tPA does have risks. Serious risks include:

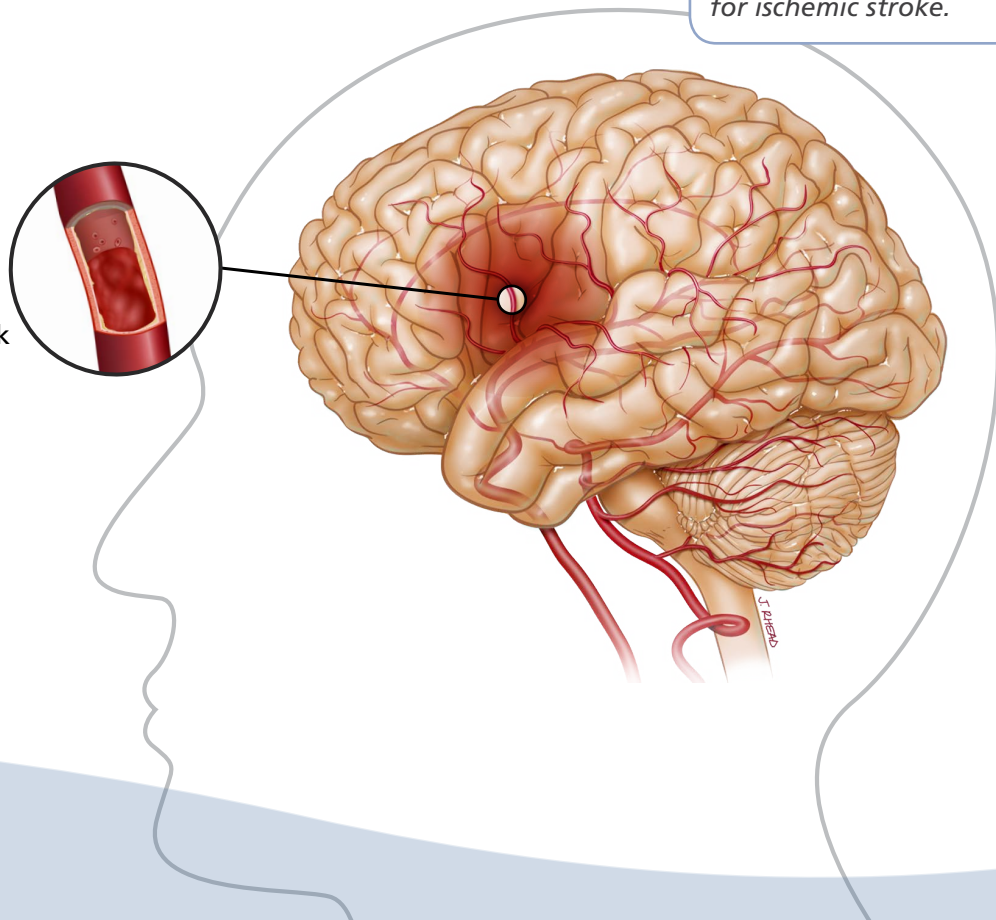
- Bleeding in the brain (main risk) or other parts of the body
- Swelling of the face or throat

What alternatives are available?

Alternatives to treating an ischemic stroke with tPA involve:

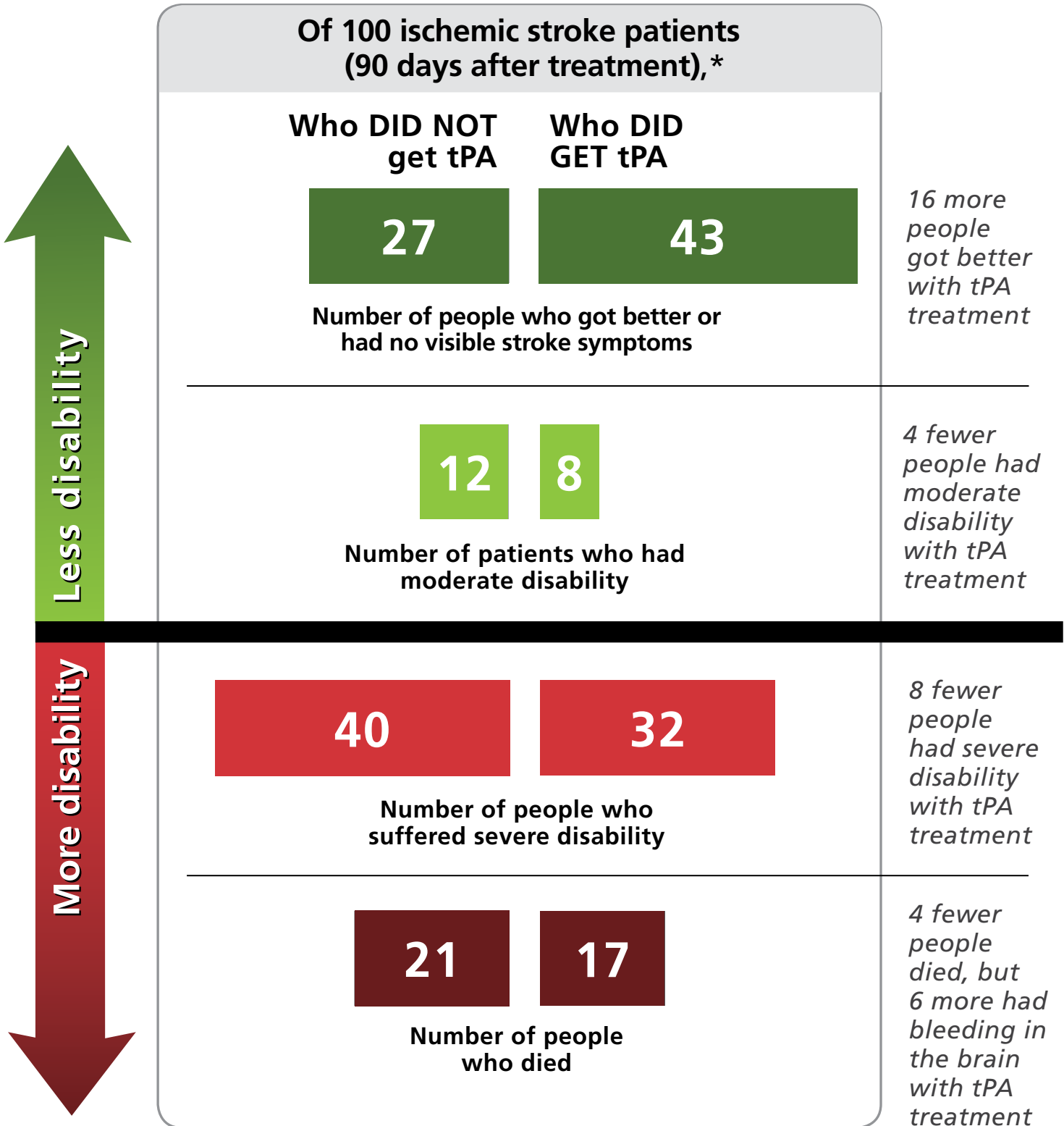
- Using a device that goes inside the artery to remove the clot
- Waiting to see if stroke symptoms resolve on their own

See page 2 for an illustration of the benefits and risks of tPA treatment for ischemic stroke.



A clot can block blood flow to part of your brain, causing a stroke.

Risks and Benefits of tPA



*Saver JL. Number needed to treat estimates incorporating effects over the entire range of clinical outcomes: Novel derivation method and application to thrombolytic therapy for acute stroke. *Arch Neurol.* 2004; 61(7): 1066-1070. doi:10.1001/archneur.61.7.1066.

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