

Stroke Information for Patients & Families

What is a stroke?

- A stroke is an injury to a part of the brain and is a medical emergency.
- It may be caused by a blockage or by a rupture in the blood vessels in the brain.
- Signs and symptoms are assessed by paramedics or by doctors in community hospital emergency departments. Patients may be transported to other hospitals that provide emergency stroke treatments i.e. Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH), Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare – Huntsville District Memorial Hospital (HDMH) or a designated centre in Toronto (i.e. Sunnybrook, St. Michaels, or Toronto Western Hospital).

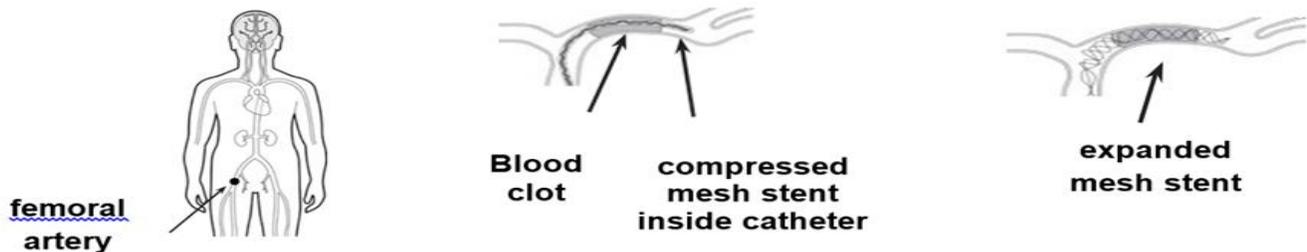
What emergency treatments are available if a blood clot caused the stroke?

Tissue plasminogen activator (tPA)

- tPA is a 'clot busting' drug used to restore blood flow to the brain

Endovascular Therapy (EVT)

- EVT is a procedure to remove a blood clot in the brain. A guidewire, catheter and metal stent are inserted through the groin and passed up the artery to where the clot is. A mesh stent "traps" the clot, and the clot is removed.



Where are these treatments available?

Treatment is time dependent.

- Patients that present to their community hospital within **4 hours** of stroke symptom onset will be assessed as candidates for tPA and EVT and potentially transported to the closest, designated Stroke Centre Emergency Department i.e. Royal

Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH) or Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare – Huntsville District Memorial Hospital (HDMH).

- Patients that present within **4-24 hours** from stroke symptom onset will be assessed as candidates for EVT and potentially transported to a designated EVT centre in Toronto (i.e. Sunnybrook, St. Michaels, or Toronto Western Hospital).
- A specialized stroke team completes the assessment at the designated stroke centres. Not all patients that are transported meet the final criteria for the treatment once they arrive. The decision is made by doctors after tests have been done at those specialized hospitals.

What is the role of a family member/caregiver/substitute decision maker?

- If at all possible, the person with Power of Attorney for Personal Care or the Substitute Decision Maker should keep their phone free. The stroke centre hospital may need to call them to provide consent for treatment.
- The person with Power of Attorney for Personal Care or the Substitute Decision Maker may be allowed to travel with a patient during transfer or they may travel to the designated stroke hospital in their own vehicle.

What happens after the treatment decision is made?

- Patients who receive tPA or EVT will be admitted to the specialized stroke centre for approximately 24-48 hours. Patients will return to a hospital closer to home when they are medically stable and suitable for transfer.
- Patients who do not receive tPA or EVT will be transferred to a hospital closer to home depending on their stroke care needs.