

Transient Ischemic Attack

What is a transient ischemic attack (TIA)?

A transient ischemic attack, or TIA, happens when a blood vessel called an artery becomes blocked. This causes less blood to get to your brain. It is sometimes called a mini stroke.

The difference between TIA and stroke is that in TIA, the artery doesn't stay blocked and the blood starts to flow again. In a stroke, the artery stays blocked and parts of the brain die.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of TIA come on suddenly and go away on their own. Common symptoms include weakness on one side of your body, problems speaking or walking, and blindness in one eye.

Who gets it?

Anyone can have a TIA, but some people have risk factors that make it more likely. Risk factors include diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, and smoking.

How do I know if I'm having a TIA?

If you are having symptoms of a TIA, you should get medical attention right away. It is important to find out whether you are having a TIA or a stroke because the symptoms are the same.

Your doctor will examine you and ask about your symptoms. You will also need a special test so that your doctor can check your brain.

How is a TIA treated?

You may have to stay in the hospital because there is a high risk of another TIA or a stroke after a TIA. Your doctor can prescribe medicine to help lower this risk. Your doctor will check for blocks in your carotid arteries, which are located in your neck. If there is a block, you may need to have a procedure to clear them.

Can a TIA be prevented?

You should keep your blood pressure, blood sugar levels, and cholesterol levels under control. Eating a healthy diet, exercising, and quitting smoking will also help lower the risk.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

American Stroke Association

Web site: http://www.strokeassociation.org/STROKEORG/AboutStroke/TIA-Transient-Ischemic-Attack_UCM_310942_Article.jsp

PubMed Health

Web site: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001743/>

September 2012

This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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