

Transient Ischemic Attack and Stroke



What Are Transient Ischemic Attack and Stroke?

Transient ischemic attack (TIA) is sometimes called a mini-stroke. TIA happens when blood going to the brain is blocked. This can happen when a blood clot gets stuck in an artery leading to the brain. This causes a quick but not lasting decrease in brain function. Symptoms go away when the blockage is cleared. TIA usually goes away after a few minutes or up to an hour.

Stroke happens when the blood is blocked for long enough that there can be permanent damage to the brain. People who have had a TIA are at high risk for having a stroke, especially during the first 48 hours after a TIA. Other risk factors for stroke include:

- High blood pressure
- Atrial fibrillation
- Diabetes
- Older age
- A broken blood vessel or injury that causes bleeding in the brain



What Are the Warning Signs of Transient Ischemic Attack and Stroke?

The symptoms for a TIA and stroke can be similar. These symptoms include:

- Being unable to move or feeling numbness on one side of the body
- Drooping or sagging on one side of the face, with trouble speaking
- Confusion or trouble understanding
- Trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Dizziness or losing balance
- Severe headache



How Are Transient Ischemic Attack and Stroke Diagnosed?

If you notice any symptoms of TIA or stroke, call 911 immediately. Do not wait to see if symptoms will go away.

- Your doctor will ask about your symptoms and medical history.
- A doctor will check to see if you have trouble with speech or moving your arms or legs.
- An imaging test, like a CT scan, MRI, or ultrasound, will be ordered to look at your brain or arteries.



How Are Transient Ischemic Attack and Stroke Treated?

Both TIA and stroke are treated as emergencies. Treatment for TIA and stroke may include emergency medicines or procedures. These include:

- Medicines to break up any blood clots and help blood flow return to normal.
- Some people may need surgery. Talk with your doctor about all possible treatment options.
- You will receive medicine to reduce your risk for a future TIA or stroke. Quitting smoking, exercising regularly, and eating healthy foods can also reduce your risk.

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Questions For My Doctor

- If my symptoms have gone away, do I really need to go to the hospital?
- How does having a TIA increase my risk of a stroke?
- How soon can I expect to recover after my stroke?
- If I had a TIA or stroke, what can I do to stop it from happening again?
- What medicine can I take to prevent TIA and stroke?
- Will there be permanent damage from my TIA or stroke?
- Can I keep doing the things I like to do if I've had a TIA or stroke?



Bottom Line

- Both TIA and stroke happen when blood flowing to the brain is blocked.
- With a TIA, the blockage clears before any permanent brain damage happens. With stroke, the blockage does not clear. It can cause brain damage that affects the body.
- Symptoms of TIA and stroke include face drooping, arm weakness, and trouble speaking.
- Both TIA and stroke should be treated as emergencies. Call 911 immediately if you notice any symptoms.
- Treatment for TIA or stroke can include medicines and procedures to help blood flow return to normal. Some people may need surgery.

For More Information

- **Medline Plus:** www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/transientischemicattack.html
- **National Institute for Neurological Disorders and Stroke**
www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/stroke/stroke_bookmark.htm
- **American Heart Association:** www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4781

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