

Symptoms of Stroke and TIA



What is stroke?

Stroke is a “brain attack.” It occurs when the blood, which brings oxygen to your brain, stops flowing and brain cells die. Each year, nearly 795,000 people in the United States have a stroke.

What is TIA?

A transient ischemic attack occurs when a blood vessel in the brain becomes blocked temporarily. A TIA can cause some of the same warning signs as a stroke, like weakness, vision or speech problems, and dizziness. However, these effects usually last only a few minutes.

While TIAs usually do not cause permanent brain damage, they are serious warning signs of stroke and should never be ignored!

How can you tell a stroke from a TIA?

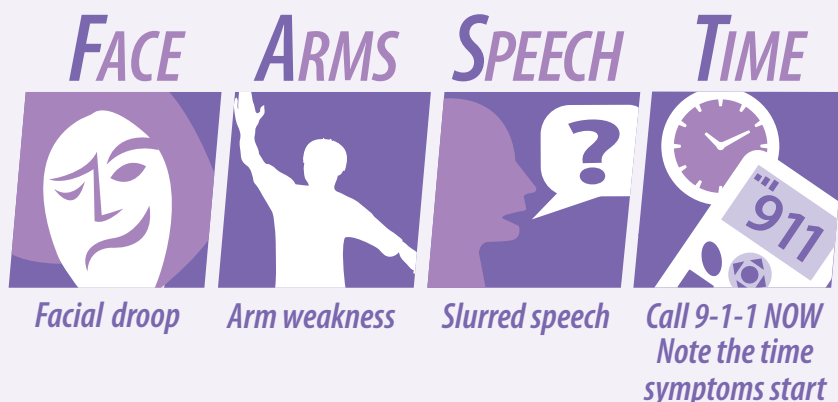
Only a doctor can tell the difference between a stroke and TIA. If you are having a TIA, your doctor can identify and treat the causes. This may reduce your risk for future stroke. If you are having a stroke, emergency treatment could save your life and improve your chances for a good recovery.

Act FAST!

If you have one or more of the symptoms listed below or see them in someone else, even for a short time, call 911 or get to a hospital fast. Treatment can be more helpful if given quickly. Stroke is an emergency—every minute counts!

Most strokes that follow a TIA occur soon after, so it is critical that you get medical help right away. Unfortunately, most people who have a TIA do not see a doctor because the symptoms are painless and go away quickly. More than one-third of all people who experience a TIA will go on to have an actual stroke.

Stroke and TIA Warning Signs



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Don't ignore a TIA

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If you have had a TIA, there's a good chance you will have another TIA or a full-blown stroke. The good news is that 80 percent of strokes are preventable. There are things you can do to reduce your risk of TIA and stroke. Identifying the cause of your TIA is the first step.

How is a TIA diagnosed?

It is important to find out the cause of a TIA so that you and your doctor can develop a stroke prevention plan. Tests to determine the cause of a TIA include:

- blood tests to check for blood clotting problems
- x-rays of the brain to look for blockages or clots in the arteries and to measure how well blood moves through the vessels; these tests include ultrasound scanning and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or a CT scan
- tests to find out if there are heart-related problems, such as an irregular heartbeat

How can a TIA be managed?

The goal of TIA management is to prevent a future stroke. In addition to lifestyle changes such as diet and exercise, your doctor may recommend drugs to treat high blood pressure, high cholesterol or heart disease. These changes may reduce your risk of further TIA or stroke.

There are medicines that help prevent blood clots from forming, reducing the risk of a full-blown stroke. Aspirin is the least expensive and most common of these medicines. Other drugs your doctor may consider include warfarin (Coumadin™), clopidogrel (Plavix®), and a combination of aspirin and extended-release dipyridamole (Aggrenox®). Other drug therapies may be prescribed as well.

If a TIA is caused by blockage in the main artery in the neck that supplies blood to the brain (the carotid artery), surgeries may be required to open the artery and prevent a stroke. These procedures are known as endarterectomy and stenting.

Ask your doctor about the best stroke prevention options for you. Then take responsibility and enjoy a healthy lifestyle. The lifestyle changes you make today—such as eating healthy foods and quitting smoking—may reduce your stroke risk tomorrow.