

Overview

Transient ischaemic attack (TIA)

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A transient ischaemic attack (TIA) is also known as a 'mini stroke'. It's caused by blood temporarily not being able to get to part of the brain. This results in a lack of oxygen to the brain.

This disruption can cause symptoms similar to a stroke. For example, speech and visual problems and feeling numb or weak in the face, arms or legs.

A TIA does not last as long as a stroke. The effects last a few minutes to a few hours and stop within 24 hours.

Symptoms of a transient ischaemic attack (TIA)

In the early stages of a TIA, it's not possible to tell if someone is having a TIA or a full stroke. A TIA is only diagnosed when the symptoms have disappeared. If they do not disappear then it is a stroke.

The main symptoms of a TIA can be remembered with the word FAST:

- Face – their face may have dropped on 1 side, the person may not be able to smile, or their mouth or eye may appear dropped or droopy on one side.
- Arms – the person may not be able to lift both arms and keep them raised because of weakness or numbness in 1 arm.
- Speech – their speech may be slurred or garbled, or the person may not be able to talk at all, despite appearing to be awake. They may also have problems understanding what you're saying to them.
- Time – it's time to call 112 or 999 immediately if you see any of these signs or symptoms.

Call 112 or 999 immediately and ask for an ambulance if you or someone else has any other symptoms of a TIA or stroke:

- not able to move one side of the body
- sudden vision loss, blurred vision or double vision
- vertigo
- being sick
- dizziness
- confusion
- problems understanding what others are saying
- problems with balance and co-ordination
- problems swallowing (dysphagia)

[Symptoms of a TIA](#)

Causes of a transient ischaemic attack (TIA)

During a TIA, one of the blood vessels that supply your brain with oxygen-rich blood becomes blocked.

This blockage is usually caused by a blood clot that travels to the blood vessels supplying the brain. The blockage can also be caused by pieces of fatty material or air bubbles.

Things that increase your chances of having a TIA include:

- smoking
- [high blood pressure \(hypertension\)](#)
- [obesity](#)
- [high cholesterol](#)
- regularly drinking too much alcohol
- a type of irregular heartbeat called [atrial fibrillation](#)
- [diabetes](#)
- disease of the carotid artery or a recent neck injury

People over age 55 and people of Asian, African or Caribbean descent are also at a higher risk of having a TIA.

[Causes of a TIA](#)

Treating a transient ischaemic attack (TIA)

Symptoms of a TIA can be over in a few minutes or hours. But you'll need treatment to help prevent another TIA or a stroke.

Treatment will depend on your circumstances, such as your age and medical history.

You're likely to be given advice about lifestyle changes to reduce your stroke risk. You will be offered

medicine to treat the cause of the TIA.

These medicines may include:

- clot preventing medicines such as aspirin
- [cholesterol lowering medicines](#)
- [blood pressure lowering medicines](#)

In some cases, a surgery called a carotid endarterectomy may be needed to unblock your carotid arteries. These arteries are the main blood vessels that supply your brain with blood.

[Treating a TIA](#)

Preventing a transient ischaemic attack (TIA)

A TIA is often a sign that you're at a high risk of having a stroke in the near future.

You can lower your risk of having a TIA or stroke by:

- maintaining a healthy weight
- [eating a healthy, balanced diet](#)
- [doing regular physical activity](#)
- [limiting alcohol](#)
- [not smoking](#)

[Preventing a TIA](#)

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