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# TIA

## What is a TIA?

A transient ischemic attack (TIA) is also called a 'mini-stroke'. It is basically a condition where one develops temporary loss of normal neurological function or so called paralysis. So he/she can have temporary weakness of one side of body or temporary loss vision in one eye. It is caused by a transient interruption of blood flow to the brain.

The only difference between a TIA and a full-blown [stroke](#) is that in a TIA, blood flow is restored before brain tissue actually dies and the symptoms recover completely.

If you have had a TIA, you are at a greatly increased risk of having a full stroke. So, if you think that you/your relative/near ones/neighbor might have had a TIA, it is critical that you seek medical care quickly.

## What are the symptoms of a TIA?

The symptoms of a TIA are identical to the symptoms of stroke, except that the symptoms of a TIA go away within few minutes to hours. The precise symptoms will vary from person to person and depend on which part and how much of the brain is being deprived of blood flow.

The most common symptoms of TIA include:

- Weakness in one side of body that includes hand, arm, leg, face, tongue, or face.
- Numbness in one side of body that includes hand, arm, leg, face, tongue, or face.
- Inability to speak coherently.
- Unexplained dizziness, often with vertigo (the sensation of spinning).
- Double vision, partial loss of vision, or other sudden visual disturbances.
- Sudden imbalance.

A TIA only becomes a TIA when the symptoms resolve by themselves! So until that moment, for all practical purposes, you are having a stroke!! If you experience any of these symptoms, you need to get medical care immediately. Do not wait to see if things get better on their own.

## What causes TIAs?



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TIA's (mini-stroke) are caused by the same disease processes that produce stroke. There is blockage of the one of the artery supplying blood to the brain. This blockage causes inadequate blood supply to part of brain leading to loss of function of that part of brain. So the conditions that can lead to stroke like high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, smoking, lack of exercise, obesity, heart disease are also risk factors for TIA.

### **Should I seek medical advice even if I have improved completely?**

Because the risk of stroke is highest in the first few days to weeks after a TIA, a delay in seeking medical help can be catastrophic. Sometimes your doctor may advise you to get admitted in a hospital. This is at times necessary to observe whether you get another TIA or stroke. In that case emergency necessary treatment can be started.

Please note that TIA is a warning symptom. It is a message given to you by your body telling that there may an impending stroke round the corner!

### **What can a doctor do for TIA?**

Since the symptoms of TIA resolve by themselves, the main goal of therapy is to prevent a stroke. So, after a TIA, your doctor will do the necessary tests to identify the causes and risk factors for TIA and will start the preventive treatments.

Identifying the cause of a TIA often requires some of following tests:

- CT scan or MRI scan
- Doppler for neck vessels
- Angiography of brain
- ECG and/or 2D echo
- Blood tests

The preventive treatment will depend largely on what has been found from the investigations. This treatment very often includes:

- Blood thinners like aspirin/similar medications
- Drugs to lower blood pressure
- Drugs to treat diabetes
- Drugs for high cholesterol
- To stop smoking
- Daily exercises



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- Dietary modifications
- If the tests show significant blockage in one of the carotid artery which supplies blood to brain, then your doctor may recommend surgical repair or stent for the blockage.

#### **Where do I get some additional information about TIA?**

- [http://www.strokeassociation.org/STROKEORG/AboutStroke/TypesofStroke/TIA/TIA-Transient-Ischemic-Attack\\_UCM\\_310942\\_Article.jsp](http://www.strokeassociation.org/STROKEORG/AboutStroke/TypesofStroke/TIA/TIA-Transient-Ischemic-Attack_UCM_310942_Article.jsp)
- <http://www.stroke.org/site/PageServer?pagename=TIA>

