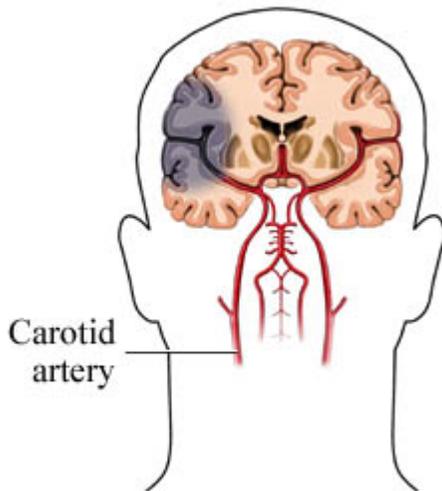


What is a TIA?



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A TIA, or transient ischemic attack, occurs when a blood clot temporarily blocks a blood vessel in the brain. TIA's are often referred to as "mini strokes" because they produce stroke-like symptoms with no lasting damage to the brain and they often resolve within 24 hours. Because they are temporary and the body soon returns to normal, it is easy to ignore them or to believe that the problem has disappeared. A TIA should never be ignored.

According to the American Heart Association, of the people who have had one or more TIA's, more than a third will later have a stroke. A TIA is a warning sign that a stroke may occur, and prompt medical attention is necessary to prevent a stroke.

What are the symptoms of a TIA?

The symptoms of a TIA may include one or more of the following:

- Numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body

- Confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Difficulty walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS

What are the risk factors for a TIA?

There are some risk factors that you can change, treat, or control, which include:

- High blood pressure—this is the single most important risk factor for stroke
- Chronic heart conditions such as carotid artery disease and atrial fibrillation.
- Diabetes
- High blood cholesterol
- Obesity
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Smoking
- Heavy use of alcohol
- Use of oral contraceptives

Other risk factors that you cannot change include:

- Race
- Gender
- Prior history of TIA or stroke

How are TIA's diagnosed?

Your physician will complete a thorough health history and medical exam to determine possible causes of your symptoms. Certain diagnostic tests may also

be ordered based on your health history, physical exam, and symptoms. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Diagnostic tests such as CT scan or MRI to help your physician to detect clots in any blood vessels in the brain or damage to any areas of the brain
- Carotid ultrasound, which measures the blood flow in the carotid arteries (the main arteries that supply blood to your brain) and detects narrowing or clotting of these arteries.
- Lipid profile, which is a group of blood tests that have been shown to be good indicators of coronary heart disease and whether someone is at risk for heart attack or stroke caused by blockage of the arteries.

How are TIA's treated?

There is no way to determine initially if symptoms are due to an actual stroke or a TIA. Because of this, patients need to seek emergency medical attention right away with all stroke-like symptoms. It is important to know if the facility you choose is a certified Primary Stroke Center. Danbury Hospital is a Primary Stroke Center.

Prompt evaluation of symptoms, within 90 minutes of onset, is important to identify the cause of the symptoms and the most appropriate treatment. Depending upon your medical history and physical exam, your physician may suggest medications to minimize your risk of stroke. This may include aspirin and blood thinners. Surgery may also be recommended if blood vessel clotting is a continued concern.

Treatment also includes lifestyle changes, such as:

- Checking your blood pressure regularly and notifying your physician if it is high

- Eating a balanced diet low in fat and cholesterol
- Maintaining a regular exercise program
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Smoking and alcohol consumption cessation
- Regular follow up appointments with your physician
- Control of other existing conditions, such as diabetes.

Sources:

American Heart Association @ www.americanheart.org

Danbury Hospital Ischemic Stroke/TIA Guide for Patients and Families

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke @ www.ninds.nih.gov

08/2007