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MADISON NEUROLOGY LLC

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Neurology Care 7 days a Week. Because Your Brain Matters.

Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA, Mini-Stroke)

Patient education guide · Stroke & Vascular · Madison Neurology LLC

What is it?

A transient ischemic attack (TIA) is a temporary blockage of blood flow to part of the brain that causes stroke-like symptoms resolving completely, usually within minutes to hours, with no permanent damage on brain imaging. A TIA is a critical warning sign: about 10-15% of people who have a TIA go on to have a full stroke, most within days.

How does it happen?

TIAs share the same causes as ischemic stroke: artery plaque, blood clots from the heart (especially atrial fibrillation), or small vessel disease from high blood pressure and diabetes. The difference is that the blockage clears on its own before permanent injury occurs.

Common symptoms

- Sudden one-sided weakness or numbness that resolves
- Brief loss of vision in one eye (amaurosis fugax)
- Temporary trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden dizziness or loss of coordination
- Symptoms typically last minutes, always less than 24 hours

How is it diagnosed?

Even though symptoms resolve, urgent evaluation is essential. MRI of the brain, imaging of the neck and brain arteries, heart rhythm monitoring, and an echocardiogram help find the source. Your team will calculate your short-term stroke risk to decide how aggressively to treat.

How is it treated?

Treatment is prevention: antiplatelet drugs (such as aspirin or clopidogrel), or anticoagulants if atrial fibrillation is found, plus a statin and blood pressure control. Significant carotid artery narrowing may require a procedure (endarterectomy or stenting). Quitting smoking, exercise, and diet changes are powerful additional protection.

What does the future hold?

A TIA causes no permanent damage itself, and with proper treatment the future stroke risk drops dramatically — by up to 80%. It is best understood as an opportunity: a warning that arrived in time to act on.

Questions patients commonly ask

Q: My symptoms went away — do I still need to see a doctor?

A: Yes, urgently. A TIA is treated with the same seriousness as a stroke because the risk of a major stroke is highest in the following days.

Q: Does a TIA show up on an MRI?

A: By definition, a TIA leaves no permanent damage on imaging, though MRI sometimes shows a small area of injury in what doctors then classify as a minor stroke.

Q: Will I need to take medication for life?

A: Most people do. Blood thinners, statins, and blood pressure medicines provide ongoing protection and are usually continued long term.

National support groups & resources

- **American Stroke Association** — stroke.org — 1-888-478-7653
- **American Heart Association** — heart.org — 1-800-242-8721
- **American Academy of Neurology — Brain & Life patient resources** — brainandlife.org

(Organization contact details were current at the time of compilation; please verify online.)

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