

What is a TIA?

Your brain needs a steady supply of blood to work properly.

If there is even a temporary blockage in one of the tiny vessels that supplies your brain with blood, you might experience symptoms such as: dizziness; headache; speech issues; weakness in one side of the body.

If these symptoms are temporary, this is called a transient ischemic attack, or TIA for short.

"I had them probably 10 minutes. Then they went away, and I said, "Oh. It must be nothing" like everybody does, we ignore it which we shouldn't."

Although the symptoms don't last long, a TIA is a serious medical event and should not be ignored.

The most common cause of a TIA is a blood vessel disease called atherosclerosis.

In this disease, fatty deposits gradually form on the inside of artery walls, narrowing or even blocking the flow of blood.

Also, tiny blood clots may form on the plaque and break off, then travel down the vessel and cause a blockage.

Or a clot can form in another part of the body, break off from the artery wall and travel to the brain, blocking the blood flow.

A TIA lasts for a few minutes to a few hours, until the body can fight back and open the blood vessel on its own. Because the blood flow is only briefly reduced, a TIA is often called a mini-stroke.

TIAs don't seem to cause permanent damage, but they are very important warning signs that a full-blown stroke may be coming.

"Perhaps the more important issue when it comes to TIA is that patients who had or persons who had suffered from a TIA, they're at increased risk for a stroke actually in the next few days after a TIA."

About one-third of people who have a TIA will experience a major stroke within the next 12 months.

The signs and symptoms of a TIA are the same as with a stroke. If you are at risk of a TIA or stroke, it's important to know the symptoms.

The American Stroke Association recommends using the FAST approach to help identify a stroke or TIA. This stands for: face drooping; arm weakness; speech difficulty; time to call 911!

If you see any of these symptoms in yourself or someone you know, seek out immediate medical help.

"If the patient or the person who's suffered or had a TIA comes to the hospital they can get a very good amount of-- I mean, the complete workup and hopefully potentially without the disability or the harms that are involved with a stroke."

After a TIA, your healthcare provider might recommend medications and lifestyle changes to reduce your risk of stroke.

What is a TIA?

Take a TIA for what it is – a warning sign. Listen to your body and begin to make changes today to reduce your risk of a stroke, and lasting damage to your brain.