

Rapid Access TIA Clinic

- Stroke Services
- June 2024

INTRODUCTION

This leaflet has been produced to give you general information about your condition. Most of your questions should be answered by this leaflet. It is not intended to replace the discussion between you and your doctor, but may act as a starting point for discussion. If after reading it you have any concerns or require further explanation, please discuss this with a member of the healthcare team caring for you.

WHAT IS A TRANSIENT ISCHAEMIC ATTACK (TIA)?

A TIA is often called a 'mini stroke'. The symptoms are very similar to those of a more severe stroke, but they do not last as long - anything from a few minutes up to 24 hours. As with a stroke, the symptoms are an indication that part of the brain is not getting enough blood. A TIA should never be ignored. Without treatment, about one in four people who have had a TIA will go on to have a more severe stroke within a few years.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF A TIA?

- Weakness, numbness, clumsiness or pins and needles on one side of the body e.g. arm, leg, face.
- Loss of in one or both eyes or double vision
- Slurred speech or difficulty finding words.

TIA/Stroke is a Medical Emergency

FAST

The FAST (**F**ace, **A**rm, **S**peech, and **T**ime) helps people to quickly recognise the key symptoms of a TIA or stroke:

Facial Weakness: Can the person smile? Has their mouth or eyelid drooped?

Arm Weakness: Can the person raise both arms?

Speech Problems: Can the person speak clearly and understand what you say?

Time: to call 999

WHAT IF YOUR SYMPTOMS DO NOT GO AWAY?

Do not just ignore your symptoms; it could lead to a major stroke. Early assessment of a TIA reduces significantly the risk of a major stroke, dependency and saves lives. If you, or someone you know, have any of the symptoms of a TIA, you should contact your GP urgently. The symptoms may be due to something other than a TIA (such as a migraine or an epileptic seizure), the sooner the symptoms can be investigated, the more likely a doctor will be able to say whether a TIA has occurred or not. Your GP will prescribe you Aspirin, or a suitable alternative, immediately according to your symptoms and will refer you to a clinic at Hull Royal Infirmary.

Please note these clinics are currently conducted remotely but you may need to attend hospital for your tests following the consultation. Please note that we will need a number to contact you on, and please do ensure this number is active and do try your best to answer the call.

If you are still symptomatic by the time you see your GP, you should be directed to Emergency department rather than to clinic.

WHAT ABOUT DRIVING?

You must **NOT** drive for four weeks from the date of the TIA event and you **MUST** see your GP for further advice before returning to drive.

If you have had more than one episode then there is a possibility you cannot drive for 3 months. Please confirm the duration at the time of the consultation. It is possible that the team may not be able to confirm the exact duration at the time of the initial consultation especially if there is uncertainty as to whether you have definitely had a TIA.

WHAT ABOUT HOLIDAY?

You must **NOT** fly for 4 weeks from the date of TIA and **MUST** inform your travel insurance company if you have a plan for holidays.

RETURN TO WORK

TIA is an episode **WITHOUT ANY RESIDUAL** symptoms, you could go back to work the next day if you are well but speak to your GP if you are feeling tired and fatigued after the episode for time off work.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

The doctor will want to know about your symptoms, what they were, how long they lasted and whether they have happened before. This will help distinguish between a TIA and other possible causes.

Following a TIA, you may have some or all of the following tests:

- A head scan (CT or MRI)
- Blood pressure measurements
- Blood tests to check amongst other things a blood glucose and cholesterol levels
- ECG to look for unusual heart rhythms or various forms of heart disease
- Chest X-ray to exclude other health problems
- Carotid Doppler scan (an ultrasound scan) or alternative CT scan of the carotid arteries to assess for any disease in your blood vessels that could be responsible for your stroke.
- ECHO cardiogram

HELPING YOURSELF

Anyone who has had a TIA is at greater risk of having another TIA or stroke. There are several things you can do yourself to reduce your risk:

Give up smoking: Smoking causes the arteries to become narrowed and makes the blood more likely to clot. Giving up can be difficult, so please consult your GP about attending a smoking cessation clinic or other help with stopping smoking.

Eat at least five portions of fruit and/or vegetables each day: There is evidence that a diet rich in fruit and vegetables, which contain protective substances called antioxidants, reduces the risk of a stroke by protecting blood vessel walls from damage.

Reduce your intake of salt: Do not add salt to your food and avoid processed foods that contain a lot of salt. If you have **high blood pressure** or **high cholesterol levels**, do ensure that you have regular check-ups and keep in touch with your GP.

Limit the amount of fat you eat: Try to limit the amount of fat you use in cooking and choose vegetable, seed and nut oils rather than margarine and butter. Avoid fatty foods such as pies, pastries and ready-meals.

Reduce your alcohol intake and avoid binge drinking: Excessive alcohol intake can raise blood pressure, while binge drinking increases the risk of a blood vessel bursting and causing bleeding into the brain. The current recommendations are 10 units per week for both men and women. A unit is one

small glass of wine (125ml), a single measure of spirit (25ml) or a half pint of normal strength (4%) beer or lager.

Increase your level of physical activity: Regular exercise can reduce the risk of stroke by lowering blood pressure, assisting with weight loss and altering the balance of fats in the blood. Thirty minutes of activity five days a week is enough to reduce your risk of stroke. This can be done in one 30 minute session or several shorter sessions each day.

Should you require further advice on the issues contained in this leaflet, please do not hesitate to contact the
TIA Service Co-ordinator
Tel no: (01482) 608722

This leaflet was produced by the Acute Stroke Department, Hull and East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust and will be reviewed in **June 2027**.

Responsible clinicians

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