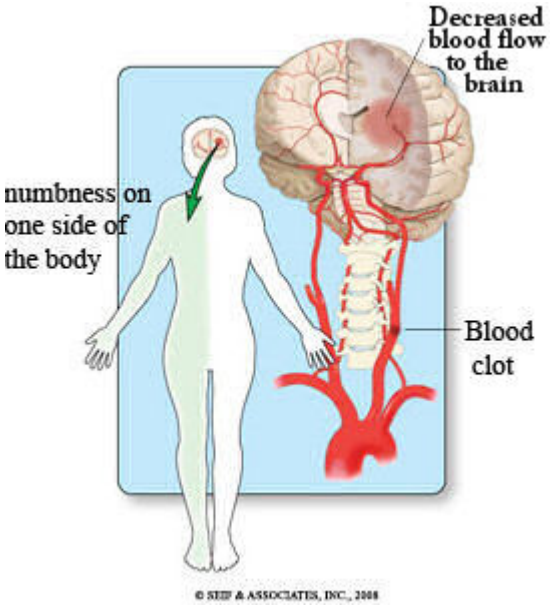
Transient Ischemic Attack

A transient ischemic attack (TIA) is a "warning stroke" that causes stroke-like symptoms. Unlike a stroke, a TIA does not cause permanent damage to the brain. The symptoms of a TIA can happen very fast and do not last long. It is important to know the symptoms of a TIA and what to do. This can help prevent a major stroke or death.

CAUSES

- A TIA is caused by a temporary blockage in an artery in the brain or neck (*carotid artery*). The blockage does not allow the brain to get the blood supply it needs and can cause different symptoms. The blockage can be caused by either:
  - A blood clot.
  - Fatty buildup (*plaque*) in a neck or brain artery.



SYMPTOMS

TIA symptoms are the same as a stroke but are temporary. Symptoms can include sudden:

- Numbness or weakness on one side of the body. Especially to the:
  - Face.
  - Arm.
  - Leg.
- Trouble speaking, thinking, or confusion.
- Change in vision, such as trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Dizziness, loss of balance, or difficulty walking.
- Severe headache.

ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS MAY REPRESENT A SERIOUS PROBLEM THAT IS AN EMERGENCY. Do not wait to see if the symptoms will go away. Get medical help at once. Call your local emergency service (911 in U.S.) IMMEDIATELY. DO NOT drive yourself to the hospital.

TIA RISK FACTORS

Risk factors can increase the risk of developing a TIA. These can include.

- High blood pressure (*hypertension*).
- High cholesterol (*hyperlipidemia*).
- Heart disease (*atherosclerosis*).
- Smoking.
- Diabetes.
- Abnormal heart rhythm (*atrial fibrillation*).
- Family history of a stroke or heart attack.
- Use of oral contraceptives (especially when combined with smoking).

DIAGNOSIS

- A TIA can be diagnosed based on your:
  - Symptoms.
  - History.
  - Risk factors.
- Tests that can help diagnose the symptoms of a TIA include:
  - CT or MRI scan. These tests can provide detailed images of the brain.
  - Carotid ultrasound. This test looks to see if there are blockages in the carotid arteries of your neck.

- Arteriography. A thin, small flexible tube (*catheter*) is inserted through a small cut (*incision*) in your groin. The catheter is threaded to your carotid or vertebral artery. A dye is then injected into the catheter. The dye highlights the arteries in your brain and allows your caregiver to look for narrowing or blockages that can cause a TIA.

TREATMENT

Based on the cause of a TIA, treatment options can vary. Treatment is important to help prevent a stroke. Treatment options can include:

- Medication. Such as:
  - Clot-busting medicine.
  - Anti-platelet medicine.
  - Blood pressure medicine.
  - Blood thinner medicine.
- Surgery:
  - Carotid endarterectomy. The carotid arteries are the arteries that supply the head and neck with oxygenated blood. This surgery can help remove fatty deposits (*plaque*) in the carotid arteries.
- Angioplasty and stenting. This surgery uses a balloon to dilate a blocked artery in the brain. A stent is a small, metal mesh tube that can help keep an artery open.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- It is important to take all medicine as told by your caregiver. If the medicine has side effects that affect you negatively, tell your caregiver right away. **Do not** stop taking medicine unless told by your caregiver. Some medicines may need to be changed to better treat your condition.
- **Do not** smoke. Talk to your caregiver on how to quit smoking.
- Eat a diet high in fruits, vegetables and lean meat. Avoid a high fat, high salt diet. A dietician can you help you make healthy food choices.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Develop an exercise plan approved by your caregiver.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop weakness or numbness on one side of your body.
- You have problems thinking, speaking, or feel confused.
- You have vision changes.
- You feel dizzy, have trouble walking, or lose your balance.
- You develop a severe headache.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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