

Transient Neurological Attacks

With symptoms lasting for up to 24 hours, **transient neurological attacks** are a warning sign that **cerebrovascular disease** (disease of the brain's blood vessels) may exist. Also known as a mini-stroke, a **transient ischemic attack** (TIA) is a **focal** (affecting one body part or system) type of transient neurological attack. Individuals who experience a TIA are at increased risk of having a stroke. Because TIAs can be caused by several factors, it is important to have an accurate diagnosis for proper treatment and prevention plans. The December 26, 2007, issue of *JAMA* includes an article about transient neurological attacks.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Sudden loss of vision
- Double vision
- Slurred or garbled speech
- Trouble finding the right words in conversation
- Weakness, paralysis, numbness, or tingling in an extremity (hand, arm, foot, leg) or in the face
- Loss of consciousness
- Sudden loss of balance or difficulty walking

SEE YOUR DOCTOR, CALL THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE SYSTEM, OR GO TO THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT IMMEDIATELY IF YOU EXPERIENCE THESE SYMPTOMS.

DIAGNOSIS

Medical history and a physical examination are important parts of diagnosing transient neurological attacks. Further testing may include blood counts and chemistries, x-rays, computed tomography (CT scan), or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). **Angiography** (x-ray pictures taken after injection of dye) may be required to look at the brain's blood vessels. You may see a **neurologist** (a doctor with specialized education in the diagnosis and treatment of neurological diseases) as part of your evaluation for a transient neurological attack.

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

- Do not smoke.
- Exercise daily.
- Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Take high blood pressure medications as prescribed.
- Keep your cholesterol and other blood lipid levels in the healthy range.
- Manage diabetes and keep blood sugar under good control.
- Medications, including those that make blood platelets less likely to form clots, may be prescribed for stroke prevention.
- Aspirin may be recommended for preventing strokes and heart attacks.
- Surgical procedures, such as **carotid endarterectomy** (surgical removal of a blockage in the carotid artery in the neck), may be recommended for some individuals to prevent strokes.

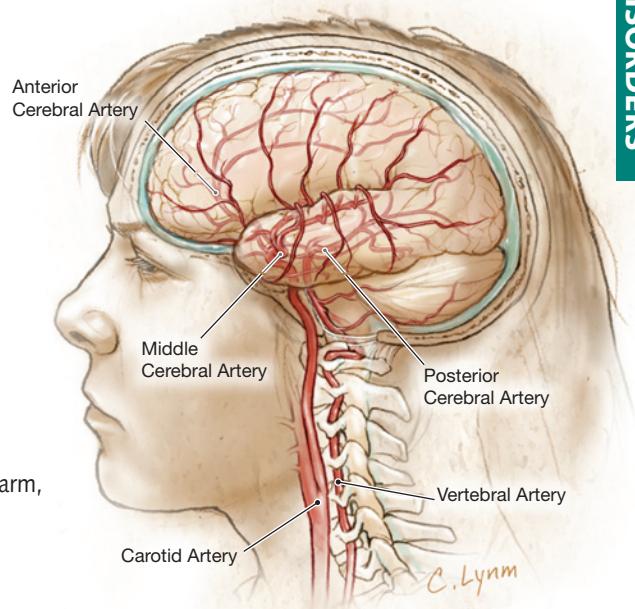
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Arteries of the Brain



FOR MORE INFORMATION

- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke
www.ninds.nih.gov
- National Stroke Association
800/STROKES (787-6537)
www.stroke.org
- American Heart Association
800/242-8721
www.americanheart.org

INFORM YOURSELF

To find this and previous JAMA Patient Pages, go to the Patient Page link on JAMA's Web site at www.jama.com. Many are available in English and Spanish. A Patient Page on hemorrhagic stroke was published in the October 20, 2004, issue.

Sources: National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, National Stroke Association, American Heart Association, American Academy of Neurology

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