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## Transient Neurological Attacks

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# 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.

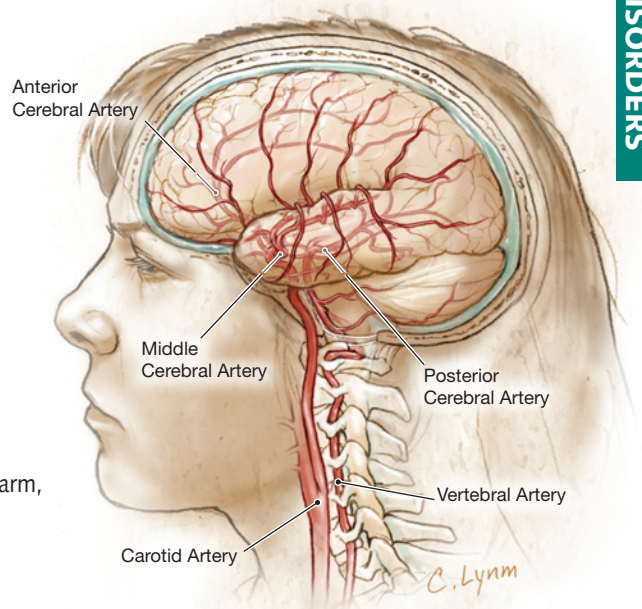
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Arteries of the Brain



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

