WHAT IS A TIA?

A wake-up call and a sign that they need to make some changes to their lifestyle. Here are some tips to help make this change.

- **Check your blood pressure** regularly so you can take steps to reduce it if necessary.
- **Eat a healthy diet and reduce salt.** This helps lower blood pressure and reduce cholesterol.
- **Stop smoking.** If you smoke and have high blood pressure you are up to 18 times more likely to have a stroke than a non-smoker your own age with normal blood pressure.
- **Move more.** Regular exercise and being active will help reduce many risk factors.
- **Keep your alcohol intake low.** Drinking more than two small alcoholic drinks per day can increase your risk of stroke.
- **Lose weight.** Being overweight puts extra strain on your blood vessels and heart. Eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly will help control your weight.
- **Take medication** as prescribed by your doctor.

DRIVING AFTER A TIA

A TIA doesn’t usually have an impact on day to day activities.

However a person who had a TIA shouldn’t drive for at least one month, because of the risk of a stroke occurring after TIA.

A doctor must give a medical clearance before you can drive again.

RISK OF A STROKE AFTER A TIA

A TIA is a sign that there is a problem with the blood supply to the brain. **Anyone who has had a TIA is at an increased risk of stroke.**

The greatest risk of having a stroke is within the first few days after a TIA. This is why it’s important to call an ambulance and seek immediate medical help if any stroke signs develop.

Specialised treatment with ‘clot busting medication’ can be given for some strokes. Act FAST because time is a crucial factor for this treatment to be considered.

TIA INFORMATION AND ADVICE

- **Stroke Foundation of New Zealand**
  - [www.stroke.org.nz](http://www.stroke.org.nz)
  - [www.strokewise.org.nz](http://www.strokewise.org.nz)
  - 0800 78 76 53 free phone for advice and link with community stroke advisors

- **Healthline 24 hour telephone advice**
  - 0800 61 11 16

- **Other sources of information**
  - **Stroke Association UK**
    - [www.stroke.org.uk](http://www.stroke.org.uk)
  - **National Stroke Foundation Australia**
  - **American Stroke Association USA**
    - [www.strokeassociation.org](http://www.strokeassociation.org)
There is no way of knowing if the signs are TIA or stroke. Getting help fast can reduce brain damage and give someone a better chance of recovery.

**CAUSE OF TIA**

In most cases TIA is caused by a blockage of blood supply to the brain. This blockage, which is temporary, is usually a clot.

The clot then either dissolves or moves. After this the blood supply to the brain returns to normal and the signs disappear.

**TEMPORARY BLOCKAGE IN BRAIN CAUSING A TIA**

Blood supply in brain is blocked or insufficient.

**DIAGNOSIS**

A suspected TIA is a medical emergency. A person with signs should be taken to hospital immediately.

TIA diagnosis is based on:

- understanding what signs occurred
- thorough medical assessment including blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar tests
- results of head scans and
- other relevant examinations and tests.

There is no way of knowing if the signs are TIA or stroke. Getting help fast can reduce brain damage and give someone a better chance of recovery.

**TRANSIENT ISCHAEMIC ATTACK - TIA**

A TIA is the same as a stroke, except that the signs last for a short amount of time and no longer than 24 hours.

Although the signs do not last long, a TIA is very serious. It means there is a problem linked with a high risk of stroke. More than one in 12 people will have a stroke within a week after a TIA.

Because of this, a TIA is often called a warning stroke or mini-stroke. It shouldn’t be ignored.

**MEDICATION**

Medication can help reduce the risk of stroke and improve your health. Medications prescribed after a TIA work in different ways.

They may

- **make blood less sticky**. Anti-platelet medication e.g. aspirin, clopidogrel
- **prevent fatty deposits from building up**. Cholesterol lowering medication e.g. simvastatin, atorvastatin
- **lower blood pressure**. e.g. cilazapril, quinapril, others
- **thin blood to prevent clotting**. e.g. warfarin or dabigatran.

It’s important to take your medication as prescribed by your doctor. Never stop taking it without talking to your doctor.