



Share the Wellness Tip

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A Stroke of Insight, Be Aware of Fleeting Symptoms

Suddenly you feel extremely dizzy. Your vision gets blurry and your head hurts unbearably. Gradually, you feel better. Your vision clears. The dizziness stops. You shake off the incident and get on with your day. Maybe you just need some breakfast. Or, maybe you've just had a transient ischemic attack, or TIA. A TIA is a [stroke](#) that comes and goes quickly. It happens when the blood supply to part of the brain stops and is briefly interrupted. With a TIA, your risk of suffering a disabling or deadly full-blown stroke within the next 90 days may be as much as 50 times greater than it was yesterday.

The warning signs for both stroke and TIA are the same. These include:

- Sudden dizziness, trouble walking, or loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on just one side of the body
- Sudden dimness or loss of vision in one or both eyes
- Difficulty in speaking or understanding speech
- Sudden, severe headache for no obvious reason

Unlike stroke, TIA symptoms usually last only a few minutes on average. This may lull a patient into dismissing the episode. But experts warn that this can be a fatal mistake. To diagnose TIA, doctors may use blood tests, electrocardiograms, CAT scans, or other imaging techniques. If TIA is confirmed, your doctor may prescribe medication such as a daily dose of aspirin to reduce your risk of stroke. For some patients, cholesterol-lowering drugs known as statins also may reduce stroke risk. If you experience stroke-like symptoms, do not wait to see if they go away. Seek emergency medical help immediately. Although the risk for stroke increases with age, a person of any age can suffer a stroke. The good news is that many strokes can be prevented. To help prevent a stroke, it is important to control your blood pressure, which is the biggest risk factor. Thirty-three percent of adults have high blood pressure, but you can help manage your blood pressure and lower your risk of suffering a stroke by:

- Quitting smoking, if necessary
- Avoiding or controlling diabetes
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Exercising regularly

For more information and resources on managing your blood pressure, an important part of stroke prevention, visit the [Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas website](#), or learn more about improving your overall heart health at mylifecheck.heart.org.

Sources: [National Institutes of Health; American Heart Association, 2012](#)

