

# Your appointment at the TIA Clinic after a suspected mini stroke

Department of Stroke Medicine

Information for Patients

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## Introduction

You have been referred to the TIA clinic by your GP or a consultant in the Emergency Department. Your appointment has been scheduled based upon the clinical information supplied by your doctor. It is essential that you keep this appointment because your doctor has suspected that you have had a transient ischaemic attack (TIA). A TIA is a warning sign that you may be at risk of having a full stroke in the near future, and an assessment can help doctors determine the best way to reduce the chances of that happening.

Please continue to take any medication prescribed to you until the appointment and bring it with you.

**It is very important that you do not drive until you have been assessed in the clinic. This is in accordance with DVLA regulations when you have had a “suspected TIA”.**

**If you notice any worsening of your speech or vision, or weakness of part or all of one side of your body, call 999 urgently. A stroke team is on call at this hospital 24 hours a day, seven days a week.**

## Your appointment details

**Location:** TIA Clinic - Ambulatory Care Services (near WHSmith),  
Level 1, Balmoral Building, Leicester Royal Infirmary.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**If you are unable to attend on the arranged date please telephone the clinic on 0116 258 5431 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm). This is also the number for any enquiries.**

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## What can I expect at my appointment?

This is a full day one-stop clinic, so you will be with us for most of the day. You will be seen by a nurse in the morning and have some initial tests. A doctor will review and discuss the results with you in the afternoon.

At the end of the day you will be provided with a diagnosis, management plan and supplementary general advice. This clinic will aim to establish whether your symptoms are due to a TIA or another cause.

As we are a teaching hospital, there may be medical students observing some of your tests. You may also be approached to consider participating in one of our ongoing clinical research studies.

Please continue to eat and drink as normal. During the morning, there will usually be plenty of time for you to get refreshments and have lunch.

- **Remember - do not drive until seen in the clinic.**
- **Please remember that this is an all-day clinic.**
- **You may bring your own food and refreshments or they can be purchased on site.**
- **Please bring a list of all your current medications.**
- **If a TIA or stroke is confirmed at your appointment, you should not drive for 30 days after the initial episode. Certain types of employment/ licences may require you to inform the DVLA.**

## Directions to the TIA Clinic

### **From Balmoral Building main entrance (near Adult Emergency Department):**

Enter via the Balmoral entrance (Level 1), turn right before reception - the TIA Clinic is at the end of the corridor. Please report to the TIA Clinic reception.

### **From Windsor Building main entrance (from Havelock Street car park):**

Enter via the Windsor main entrance (Level 0). Turn first right to locate the lift or stairs to Level 1. Follow signs to the Balmoral Building, continue all the way down the corridor, turn left at the 'Ophthalmology Rapid Access Clinic', and follow signs for TIA DVT clinics (sign posted).

A WHSmith shop is on the left. After the shop turn first left and the TIA clinic (sign posted) is at the end of the corridor. Please report to the TIA Clinic reception

## Can I bring someone with me?

You are welcome to bring a friend or relative with you to the clinic, but please note that they may not always be allowed into the examination rooms. You might find it helpful to bring someone with you if you do not understand English very well or if you have any special needs.

Unfortunately, we are unable to offer childcare facilities. If you need to bring your children with you, please bring along an adult who can supervise them while your tests are carried out.

## What is a TIA?

A transient ischaemic attack (TIA) is often called a mini stroke or mild stroke. It is caused by a temporary disruption in the blood supply to part of the brain. The disruption in blood supply results in a lack of oxygen to the brain.

This can cause sudden symptoms which are very similar to those of a full blown stroke, but they only last for a short time - anything from a few minutes up to 24 hours. If you've had a TIA you will recover completely within about a day. If your symptoms have lasted longer than 24 hours, you may have had a stroke rather than a TIA.

A TIA is a sign that part of your brain is not getting enough blood and you are at risk of having a stroke in the future. There is no way of telling whether you are having a TIA or stroke when the symptoms first start.

## What are the symptoms of a TIA?

The main symptoms of a TIA can be remembered with the word **FAST**:



- **Face** - the face may have dropped on 1 side, the person may not be able to smile, or their mouth or eye may have dropped.
- **Arms** - the person may not be able to lift both arms and keep them raised because of weakness or numbness in 1 arm.
- **Speech** - their speech may be slurred or garbled, or the person may not be able to talk at all, despite appearing to be awake; they may also have problems understanding what you're saying to them.
- **Time** - it's time to call 999 immediately if you see any of these signs or symptoms.

### Other symptoms of TIA Include:

- Weakness, clumsiness, numbness or pins and needles of the face, arm or leg on one side of the body.
- Temporary loss of vision in one eye.

It's important to call 999 immediately and ask for an ambulance if you or someone else has symptoms of a TIA or stroke. If a TIA is suspected, you should be offered aspirin to take straight away. This helps to prevent a stroke. Even if the symptoms disappear while you're waiting for an ambulance to arrive, you still need to be assessed in hospital. You should be referred to see a specialist within 24 hours of the onset of your symptoms.

## What tests will I have in the TIA clinic?

Several tests may be done to confirm a TIA and look for problems that may have caused it. Some of the tests you may need include:

- **MRI or CT scan of the brain** - an MRI scanner is a large tube that contains a series of powerful magnets used to produce detailed images of the inside of the body. The scan doesn't hurt, is completely harmless, and takes about 15 minutes.

During the scan, you lie down and rest your head in a tube. Occasionally, the scanner will make a loud clicking sound. Not everyone can have an MRI scan, such as people who have a pacemaker fitted. You will be asked to fill in a safety questionnaire before the scan.

- **Ultrasound scan of the carotid arteries** - a carotid ultrasound scan is a painless and harmless way of looking at the arteries in your neck. This can show if there is narrowing or any blockages in the neck arteries leading to your brain.

Ultrasound machines produce pictures made using information from high frequency sound waves which are called 'ultrasound'. The ultrasound waves are produced by a probe which is placed on the body over the area to be investigated (the neck in this case). The picture produced can be seen on a display screen. The scan takes about 10 minutes. To enable the ultrasound to transmit into your body, a small amount of water-based gel is applied to your skin.

- **ECG tracing of your heart rhythm** - an electrocardiogram (ECG) records the electrical activity of your heart. The test is painless and harmless. It takes about 5 minutes to do. Small metal electrodes are stuck on to your arms, legs and chest. Wires from the electrodes are connected to the ECG machine. The machine detects and amplifies the electrical impulses that occur at each heartbeat and records them on paper or a computer. A few heartbeats are recorded from different sets of electrodes.

An ECG can detect abnormal heart rhythms, which may be a sign of conditions such as where your heart beats irregularly (atrial fibrillation), which can increase your risk of TIAs.

- Blood tests to check whether you have high cholesterol or diabetes.
- Height and weight measurement.
- Blood pressure measurement - high blood pressure (hypertension) can lead to TIAs.
- We will ask you about your medical history.
- Consultation with a stroke consultant.

## Causes of a transient ischaemic attack (TIA)

During a TIA, 1 of the blood vessels that supply your brain with oxygen-rich blood becomes blocked. This blockage is usually caused by a blood clot that's formed elsewhere in your body and travelled to the blood vessels supplying the brain, although it can also be caused by pieces of fatty material or air bubbles. Certain things can increase your chances of having a TIA, including:

- smoking.
- high blood pressure (hypertension).
- obesity.
- high cholesterol levels.
- regularly drinking an excessive amount of alcohol.
- having a type of irregular heartbeat called atrial fibrillation.
- having diabetes.
- people over 55 years of age and people of Asian, African or Caribbean descent are also at a higher risk of having a TIA.

## Treating a TIA

Although the symptoms of a TIA resolve in a few minutes or hours, you'll need treatment to help prevent another TIA or a full stroke happening in the future. Treatment will depend on your individual circumstances, such as your age and medical history.

You're likely to be given advice about lifestyle changes you can make to reduce your stroke risk, and be offered medicine to treat the cause of the TIA.

In some cases, a surgery called a carotid endarterectomy may be needed to unblock your carotid arteries, which are the main blood vessels that supply your brain with blood.

## Preventing a TIA

A TIA is often a sign that another one may follow and you're at a high risk of having a full, life-threatening stroke in the near future. Regardless of whether you have had a TIA or stroke in the past, there are several ways you can lower your risk of having either in the future. These include:

- maintaining a healthy weight.
- eating a healthy, balanced diet.
- doing regular exercise.
- limiting alcohol.
- not smoking.

## Further information

NHS website: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/transient-ischaemic-attack-tia/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/transient-ischaemic-attack-tia/)

## Giving us your feedback

If you wish to make any comments or suggestions about your visit to the TIA Clinic, or if you have any comments about how we can improve these leaflets, please speak to a member of staff. Feedback surveys are also available on our website: [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk)

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