

Accessing the neurovascular clinic

You have been given this leaflet because we suspect you have had a transient ischaemic attack (TIA) and you need to attend the neurovascular clinic for further tests.

A TIA is a sign that you are at risk of having a stroke in the near future. Of all the strokes that follow a TIA, half of them occur within the first couple of days after the attack. However, these can be prevented if the cause is investigated and the appropriate treatment is given, so it is important that you have an appointment at the neurovascular clinic as soon as possible.

What is a TIA?

A transient ischaemic attack (TIA) is sometimes referred to as a 'mini stroke'. The symptoms of a TIA are similar to those of a stroke. However, with a TIA these will resolve very quickly, usually within several minutes (and certainly within 24 hours). If your symptoms have lasted longer than 24 hours, you may have had a stroke and not a TIA.

During a TIA one of the blood vessels in the brain is temporarily blocked, usually by a blood clot. This causes a short disturbance in the flow of blood to your brain. As this is temporary, blood flow returns to normal, so the symptoms resolve.

With a stroke, the disturbance in blood flow to the brain lasts much longer. As the brain cells do not get a constant supply of blood, they begin to die and the symptoms do not resolve.

What are the symptoms of a TIA?

The key symptoms of a stroke or TIA can be recognised using the acronym 'FAST':

Facial weakness

- Can the person smile?
- Has their mouth or eye drooped?

Arm weakness

- Can the person raise both arms?

Speech problems

- Can the person speak clearly and understand what someone is saying to them?

Time to call 999

- If any of these symptoms are seen, it is a medical emergency, call for an ambulance immediately

If at any time before your appointment you experience a new onset of symptoms, it is a medical emergency, dial 999 immediately, do not wait for your appointment.

What is the neurovascular clinic?

The neurovascular clinic is a free specialist service that will confirm whether or not you have had a TIA. You will be met by a stroke specialist who will ask you questions about your symptoms and general health and then assess you for any neurological symptoms.

Who can receive the service?

If you have had any of the FAST symptoms and they have now resolved, you will be referred to the neurovascular service by the emergency department or your GP.

How do I make an appointment?

When you are discharged from the emergency department, you will be booked to attend the next available clinic. The stroke consultant secretary will phone you to book your appointment. However, if you haven't been informed of an appointment within 48 hours of leaving the emergency department, please call **020 7188 2515** to schedule your appointment time.

If you are running late or unable to make your appointment please inform the outpatients department on 020 7188 7188 (extension 54079).

Where and when is the clinic?

Neurovascular clinics run every Monday afternoon and Thursday morning (excluding bank holidays) in Gassiot House, St Thomas' Hospital.

What happens in the clinic?

You may have any of the following tests:

- electrocardiogram (checking if you have a regular heart rhythm)
- blood pressure
- blood tests
- brain scan
- ultrasound of your neck (looking at the blood flow to the brain)
- echocardiogram (checking for heart disease)

What do I need to bring?

- Please bring any **current medication**.
- **Witness of the event** – If there is anyone who witnessed your attack, it is helpful if they can come with you to your appointment. There may be things that they noticed about your appearance and behaviour that you didn't.
- **Questions** – There will be time during your consultation to ask questions you may have regarding your TIA.

Driving

You must not drive until you have seen a stroke specialist who will advise you when it is safe to do so.

Contact us

For any other information please call the stroke consultant secretary on **020 7188 2515** (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm), who will help you get in touch with a stroke consultant or stroke specialist nurse.

For any other information regarding stroke and TIA visit www.stroke.org.uk