Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service

**TIA (Mini Stroke) information sheet**

**Why is a TIA important?**
- TIA is important as it indicates a risk of subsequent stroke.
- A TIA should never be ignored; without treatment about one in four people who have had a TIA will go on to have a more severe stroke.

**Diagnosing a TIA**
To definitely diagnose a TIA, further testing and assessment is required. Most of this can safely be done as an outpatient. Further tests may include:
- A head scan, Computed Tomography, (CT) or Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI).
- Neck artery scans (ultrasound or CT) to check blood flow and blockages.
- Blood tests to check cholesterol and blood sugar levels.
- Blood pressure monitoring.
- Echocardiogram ultrasound to look for heart disease.
- Electrocardiogram (ECG) to look for usual heart rhythms.

Fortunately, after further assessment, up to half of people don’t end up having a definite diagnosis of TIA. Other diagnosis can include: migraine, epileptic seizures, fainting, delirium, inner ear problems and even stress reactions.

**What about driving?**
We advise that you should not drive for at least two weeks after a diagnosis of TIA. You need medical clearance from your GP to recommence driving. Driving without medical clearance may leave you at risk of legal action.

**Medication management**
To help prevent further TIA/stroke, you may commence tablets.

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**What is a TIA?**
A Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA) is often called a ‘mini stroke’. The symptoms are very similar to those of a stroke but they do not last as long, usually only a few minutes to an hour or two.

A TIA happens when the blood supply to the brain is interrupted for a short period of time.

**Signs and symptoms of a TIA/stroke, remember: FAST**
- Facial weakness, Arm weakness and difficulty with Speech are the most common signs of stroke, but they are not the only signs. Other signs of stroke may include one, or a combination of:
  - Weakness or numbness or paralysis of the face, arm or leg on either or both sides of the body.
  - Difficulty speaking or understanding.
  - Dizziness (sudden and severe onset).
  - Loss of balance or an unexplained fall.
  - Loss of vision, sudden blurring or decreased vision in one or both eyes.
  - Headache, usually severe and abrupt onset or unexplained change in the pattern of headaches.
  - Difficulty swallowing.

**Time** is critical, if you experience any of these symptoms seek immediate medical attention.
It is important you understand what you are taking, how often and why. The most common medications used include blood thinning medication, blood pressure medication and cholesterol medications. It is very important that you continue to take these. See your GP or discuss with your specialist if you would like to cease any medications or are experiencing side effects.

**Follow up**
It is important to complete follow up as advised and to return to the hospital if there are any problems. If required, see your GP for a referral to a dietician for further nutrition education.

**Reducing your risk of stroke**
Know your blood pressure and your cholesterol levels. You can control your blood pressure and cholesterol by changing your diet, lifestyle and continuing medications. Continuing blood thinning medications is very important to prevent further blood clots and stroke.

**Give up smoking**
Smoking causes the arteries to become narrowed and makes the blood more likely to clot. Giving up can be difficult, phone Quitline® 131 848 or ask your GP about quitting.

**Eat at least two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables each day**
There is evidence that a diet rich in fruit and vegetables is low in fat and contains protective substances called antioxidants, reduces the risk of stroke by protecting blood vessel walls from damage.

**Reduce your intake of salt**
Don’t add salt to your food and avoid processed foods eg biscuits that contain a lot of salt.

**Limit the amount of saturated fat you eat**
Try to limit the amount of fat you use in cooking and stick to vegetable, seed and nut oils rather than margarine and butter. Choose lean meats and low fat dairy foods.

**Reduce your alcohol intake and avoid binge drinking**
Excessive alcohol can raise blood pressure, while binge drinking increases the risk of a blood vessel bursting and causing bleeding into the brain. No more than two standard drinks per day is recommended.

**Increase your level of physical activity**
Regular exercise can reduce the risk of stroke by lowering blood pressure, assisting with weight loss and altering the balance of fats in the blood.

Thirty minutes of activity five days a week is enough to reduce your risk of stroke. This can be done in one 30 minute session or several shorter sessions a day. For any side effects/concerns please see your GP.