

# Stroke and TIA: Finding the Cause

## University of Pittsburgh Medical Center

### Information for Patients

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It's very important to find what causes a stroke or stroke warning signs (TIA). Your doctor must know the cause to decide on the best treatment for you. Your doctor will ask questions about your health now and in the past. He or she will also ask about your family's health. You will have a complete physical exam. The doctor will also check your nervous system. This is called a neurologic (noor-uh-LOJ-ik) exam. This exam checks your level of alertness, sensation, coordination, reflexes, muscle strength, and response to pain.

## Diagnostic tests

After looking at the results of the physical and neurologic exams, your doctor may send you for one or more tests. These tests are called diagnostic (die-ag-NOS-tik) tests. These tests help to find what caused your stroke or TIA. They also help to detect the type, size, and location of the brain injury that resulted from the stroke or TIA.

There are 2 types of diagnostic test. The first type of test is called **non-invasive**. During a non-invasive test, no foreign object or substance enters your body. For example, an x-ray is a non-invasive test.

The second type of test is **invasive**. An invasive test makes a puncture or cut (incision), injects a fluid, or inserts an instrument into your body. For example, tests that use an

intravenous (IV) line are invasive. Before you have an invasive test, you must sign a consent form.

Diagnostic tests that are done the most often are x-ray, ultrasound, and computer-assisted imaging. Some of these tests combine invasive and non-invasive procedures.

## Questions and concerns

Generally, you have little or no discomfort during a neurologic diagnostic test. You will have no side effects, or the side effects are minor. Here are the 3 basic rules to follow during your test:

- Relax.
- Remain still.
- Do what the doctor, nurse, or technician tells you.

It's normal to have some anxiety before and during a test. But a diagnostic test should not be a frightening experience for you. Feel free to express any concerns about your tests. Ask the medical staff any questions you may have.

My doctor's name \_\_\_\_\_

My doctor's phone \_\_\_\_\_