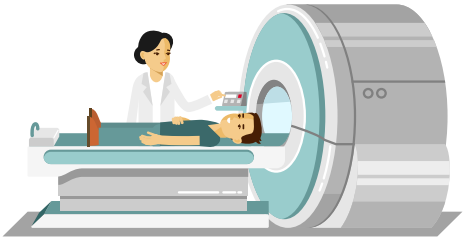
Common Tests After a Stroke or Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA)

After a stroke or transient ischemic attack (TIA), different tests are done to understand what happened, identify what treatment is best for you and to help prevent future strokes.

This handout guides you through some of the common tests that **may** be done. Your physician or nurse practitioner will decide which tests you require. You may not need all of these tests.

> The information in this handout does not replace a more detailed explanation of the test provided by the physician, nurse practitioner or technician performing the test.

CT Scan (Computed Tomography)



- **What is it?** A special X-ray that takes pictures of your brain.
- **Why is it done?** To see if there is bleeding or other damage in your brain.
- **What to expect:** You will lie still on a table that slides into a tunnel-like machine. The scan is painless and takes about 5-10 minutes.

CTA Scan (Computed Tomography Angiography)

- **What is it?** A special type of CT scan to look at your blood vessels.
- **Why is it done?** To see if there are blockages or narrowing of the blood vessels in your neck or brain.
- **What to expect:** To make your blood vessels easier to see, a special liquid called "contrast dye" is injected through an IV in your arm. This dye helps the blood vessels show up clearly on the pictures. You may feel a small pinch when the needle is put into your arm. Some people also feel a warm sensation in their body when the dye goes in, but this goes away quickly.

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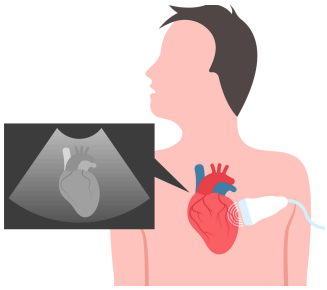
MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging)

- **What is it?** A test that uses magnets and radio waves to take detailed pictures of your brain.
- **Why is it done?** This is another way to take pictures of the brain, but it provides even more detail than a CT scan.
- **What to expect:** It is like a CT scan, but the MRI takes longer (30-60 minutes). Ear protection will be provided because the machine is loud.

Carotid Ultrasound

- **What is it?** A test that uses sound waves to look at blood flow in the carotid arteries (blood vessels in your neck) which supply blood to the brain.
- **Why is it done?** To check for narrowing or blockages in these arteries.
- **What to expect:** A gel will be placed on your neck, and a small handheld device will move over it. The sound waves create images of the arteries.

Transthoracic Echocardiogram (TTE)



- **What is it?** An ultrasound of your heart.
- **Why is it done?** To see how well your heart is pumping and to check for blood clots and other abnormalities that may have caused the stroke.
- **What to expect:** A gel will be applied to your chest, and a handheld device is moved across your chest to create images of the heart using sound waves.

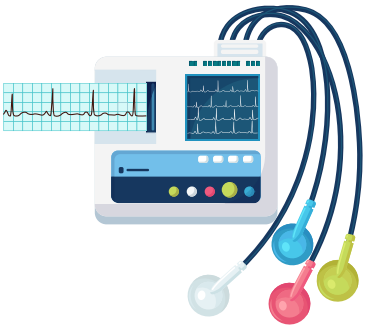
Transesophageal Echocardiogram (TEE)

- **What is it?** Similar to a transthoracic echocardiogram but provides a better image
- **Why is it done?** Certain conditions are better seen with a transesophageal echocardiogram
- **What to expect:** You will be given medication to help you relax and keep you comfortable. A tube with an ultrasound device will be passed through your mouth and down your throat. You may be asked to swallow to help pass the device. Once it is in the right place, images are taken.

Electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG)

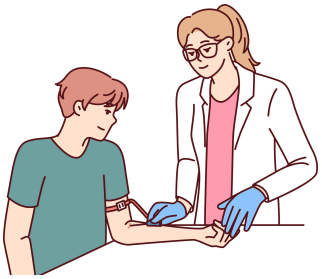
- **What is it?** A test that detects abnormal rhythms (electrical activity) of your heart.
- **Why is it done?** To see if you have an irregular heartbeat, which could cause a stroke.
- **What to expect:** Sticky pads called electrodes will be placed on your chest, arms, and legs. The test is quick and painless.

Holter Monitor



- **What is it?** A small, wearable device that records your heart's activity (like its beats and rhythm) over typically 1-2 days but may be longer (14 days).
- **Why is it done?** To check for irregular or abnormal heart rhythms (electrical activity) that may have contributed to your stroke.
- **What to expect:** The monitor is connected to small, sticky patches (electrodes) that are placed on your chest. You wear the monitor in a pouch around your neck or clipped to your belt. It records your heart's activity while you do your normal activities, like walking, eating, and sleeping. You will be asked to keep a diary of what you do and how you feel.

Blood Tests



- **What is it?** Tests that checks your blood for things like cholesterol levels, sugar levels, and clotting ability.
- **Why is it done?** To find out if these things contributed to your stroke.
- **What to expect:** A small needle will be used to take a sample of your blood.

For information about your tests and the results, speak directly with your physician or nurse practitioner.

For additional information on stroke-related topics, please visit the **Patient & Family** tab on our website at www.cesnstroke.ca or scan the QR code.