◊ Confusion.
◊ Dizziness.
◊ Blindness.
◊ Double vision.
◊ Slurred speech, inability to talk, or difficulty swallowing.
◊ Loss of co-ordination or balance.

Contact details

If you have any questions about any of the information contained in this leaflet please contact:

Clinic 8, Lincoln County Hospital
01522 573566
Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Royle Eye Department, Pilgrim Hospital
01205 445626
Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

References

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk

The Trust endeavours to ensure that the information given here is accurate and impartial.

If you require this information in another language, large print, audio (CD or tape) or braille, please email the Patient Information team at patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk
Aim of the leaflet

This leaflet is aimed at patients who have been diagnosed with amaurosis fugax and aims to explain the diagnosis, living with the condition and the treatment available.

About your diagnosis

Amaurosis fugax is a short-lived episode of blindness in one eye (monocular). This symptom usually develops suddenly and many individuals describe the event as "it was as if a shade or curtain came over my eye." It is caused by a blockage or low blood flow within the main blood vessel supplying the eye. Blockages are usually due to a blood clot or plaque (small piece of cholesterol) that breaks off from a larger artery and travels upward to the brain or eye, becoming lodged in the main artery supplying the eye. Low blood flow to the eye may also result from a critical narrowing of one of the main blood vessels supplying blood to the brain and eye. The monocular blindness of amaurosis fugax is generally brief, but in rare cases it may be prolonged or permanent.

Living with your diagnosis

An episode of amaurosis fugax is often frightening. Although the visual loss most often gradually resolves, one should seek medical attention right away because this is potentially one of the warning signs of a stroke.

Treatment

The treatment of amaurosis fugax depends on identifying the source of the blood clots or cholesterol that have caused low blood flow or blocked the main artery to the eye. Blood clots may come from arteries inside the head, arteries in the neck, or from the heart. Several different tests may need to be done to find the source. These tests may include an ultrasound of the carotid arteries in the neck, a study of the electrical system of the heart, a magnetic resonance angiography (MRA) scan of the blood vessels in the head and neck, an echocardiogram of the heart, or an angiogram (dye imaging of the blood vessels). If these studies reveal the source of the problem, medication and/or surgery may be necessary.

The DOs

- If you are a diabetic, maintain especially good control of your blood sugar.
- If you use tobacco, immediately begin a program to quit smoking. Ask your physician for help.

The DON'Ts

- DO NOT DRIVE if you are having an episode or having a number of episodes. A sudden loss of vision in one eye could put you and others in danger.
- Don't use tobacco because it promotes vascular disease.
- Don't ignore any of the above signs or symptoms because they may be an early warning sign of a major stroke.

When to call your doctor

- If you have an unusually severe headache.
- If you have another episode of vision loss, call immediately.
- If you have signs or symptoms of a transient ischemic attack (TIA), call your GP immediately. The following are some of the more common symptoms of a TIA:
  ◊ Weakness or numbness on one side of the face or body (face, arm, leg).
  ◊ Changes in vision.