



RADIO-IODINE THERAPY

Information and instructions for patients receiving radio-iodine therapy for the treatment of Thyrotoxicosis

Why do I need treatment?

You have a condition called thyrotoxicosis. This means your thyroid gland is overactive. If it is not properly treated, your health may be affected in the future.

What is radio-iodine treatment?

Radio-iodine treatment uses a form of iodine that is radioactive. Iodine is taken up by the thyroid gland, so only a small amount of radioactivity is needed.

Are there other forms of treatment?

There are other forms of treatment such as surgery or tablets. Your doctor considers that radio-iodine is the best form of treatment for you.

What preparations do I need?

If you are on anti-thyroid medications (such as Neomercazole and Propylthiouracil), please stop these several days (3 to 5) before the radio-iodine treatment. It is also recommended that you do not eat fish or seafood 2 days prior to the therapy day.

How is the iodine given?

On the day of the treatment, you will be given a capsule containing radio-iodine. You will be asked to swallow it without chewing, along with some water. The capsule will have no taste to it.

Where else in the body does the radioactivity go?

Most of the radio-iodine is taken up by the thyroid. The rest of the radio-iodine mainly passes out of your body in the urine.

Are there any side effects?

Radio-iodine can occasionally cause slight neck and face discomfort and a temporary increase in thyroid activity, which goes away within 2 weeks and usually within a few days. There is a risk of developing an under-active thyroid, which will require lifelong thyroxine replacement tablets.

Do I need to recommence my anti-thyroid medications after the radio-iodine treatment?

Some of you may need to recommence your anti-thyroid medications (Neomercazole or Propylthiouracil) a few days after radio-iodine treatment and only for a short period. Please discuss this with your doctor.

Will I need to see a doctor after the radio-iodine treatment?

Yes. You should be seen by your doctor after the treatment and have blood tests taken. These are to check how your gland has responded.

Can radio-iodine treatment cause cancer?

NO, radio-iodine has been used for 40 years to treat thyrotoxicosis. Patients treated this way have been studied carefully. There is no increased risk of developing thyroid cancer or other cancers as a result of treatment.



Are there any risks in having children afterwards?

NO, 40 years of experience of using radio-iodine shows no effect on the health of the children of patients who have had radio-iodine. However, it is advisable that you avoid pregnancy, breastfeeding or fathering children for 6 months after radio-iodine treatment.

Will there be any danger to my family?

NO, but please take the following radiation safety precautions. These are merely to avoid any unnecessary radiation to your family members and friends.

Radiation Safety Precautions

After the capsule, your body contains a small amount of radioactivity, therefore, it is important that you try to reduce the radiation dose to others. In the first two days after the treatment, your body is most radioactive, hence, particular care should be taken over this period.

- Try and stay at a “social” distance (>1m) from other people.
- You may travel home by public transport. You may travel home by private transport, with a maximum of one other person in the car. You may drive yourself. If you are travelling with someone else, please ensure that you are seated diagonally opposite to the other person.
- It is advisable that you make arrangements to sleep apart from your partner for 5 days. Minimise close contact with him or her throughout the remainder of the first day.
- As all your bodily secretions, including urine, contain small amounts of radioactivity, you must flush the toilet (use full flush) after use, men should sit to urinate, and wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.
- Use your own plate / set of cutlery.
- Close contact (<1 m) with pregnant women and young children should be avoided for 1 week.
- Return to see your Doctor 4 to 6 weeks after treatment. Please feel free to speak to the Doctor or staff at the Nuclear Medicine facility where you will be having your capsule.