

Radiation Safety Information for Patients Undergoing Radioiodine Therapy

You have been treated with radioactive iodine to cure a thyroid problem. Most of the iodine will leave your body through the urine. For 1 - 2 days, however, some of the iodine will stay inside your body, which means that you in turn can irradiate other people physically close to you.

It is your responsibility to protect relatives, friends, colleagues and others. The following questions and answers are designed to inform you about simple precautions to be taken.

1. What are the most important precautions to minimise radiation to others? The most important factors are distance and time. Try to maintain a distance of at least 1 metre from other people. Do not sit or stay close to any person either at home or at work. If you are with someone for longer periods (perhaps more than one hour), stay at least 2 metres away.

Passing someone briefly, for example in the street, or while shopping, is permissible - as is a quick hug.

2. What about contacts with pregnant women? Contact with pregnant women should be minimised. Try to stay at least 2 metres away from a pregnant woman.

3. Can I still see my children and care for them? If your children are under five years old, minimise hugging or holding and avoid prolonged contact for the specified restriction period.

4. What about infants? Children under three years old should be looked after by someone else. If possible, arrange for them to stay with relatives or friends.

5. Can I go on with breast-feeding? Radioactive iodine is passed on in breast milk for quite a long time. Therefore, it is important that breast-feeding be stopped completely.

6. Can I be in close contact with my partner or other people at home? You should sleep in a separate bed and restrict sexual contact for the specified restriction period. Beds should be at least 2 metres apart, even if there is a wall separating them. This is because the walls of a house do not provide good protection against the type of radiation emitted by iodine-131. Kissing should be avoided in order to prevent the transmission of radioactivity in the saliva.

7. What if my partner is pregnant? If your partner is pregnant, it is important to avoid close contact with her.

8. Do these precautions apply for my contact with people over 60 years of age? The radiation related risk is much lower for people over 60 years of age than it is for younger people. For that reason, special precautions are less important.

9. Can I receive visitors? Short visits, less than two hours, create no problem. Keep at a distance of about 2 metres and preferably avoid close contact. You should discourage visits by young children and pregnant women.

10. Can I go to work? Most people can go to work. If, by the nature of your work, you are within 1 metre of the same individual(s) for more than two hours per day, you should seek advice from your doctor. You should in any case inform your manager

11. What if I am a nursery school teacher? Nursery school teachers, or others who are in close contact with young children during working hours, should stay off work. Your doctor will indicate the required period of time for this restriction.

12. Can I go to the movies or other entertainment? Avoid visiting cinemas and other social events for the first 2 days where you are close to other people for more than one hour.

13. May I use public transport? Public transport can involve you sitting close to another person and restrictions may be required on travel of long duration. For long trips you should try to find a place where you can sit alone. Long distance travel immediately after administration is not recommended due to the potential for travel sickness and the possibility for contamination. Your doctor will advise you on appropriate travel times.

14. What about using a taxi? Sit in the back on the opposite side from the driver. Do not spend more than two hours with any one taxi driver.

15. Can I use the same toilet as other people? Yes, but spilling of urine needs to be avoided. Therefore, (also for men) pass urine while seated. Always dry your genitals with toilet paper and flush the toilet. It is also important to wash your hands immediately afterwards, even when only urinating.

16. What about cutlery, crockery, bed linen, towels etc? Radioactive iodine also leaves the body in the saliva and the sweat of patients. Therefore, cutlery, crockery, towels, bed linen etc. should not be shared with others. After washing they are completely safe. There is no need to wash them separately.

17. What happens if I have to go to hospital? If you have to go to hospital unexpectedly, please inform the doctor that you have been treated with radioactive iodine recently. This applies even when it is the same hospital where you were treated.

18. Is it safe to become pregnant/father children? Some of the radioactive iodine will remain in your body for several months and it is recommended that females should avoid becoming pregnant for six months and males should not father children for four months following the treatment.

19. What happens if I have to go overseas? Some airports, as part of their security, have extremely sensitive radiation detectors that are able to detect minute amounts of radioactivity. If you are travelling by air soon after your treatment you should take some documentation about your treatment.

If in doubt, you should always ask the advice of the doctor treating you.

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Recommended restriction period for patients after I-131 Therapy for Thyrotoxicosis.

Radiation exposure to other people can be reduced by keeping a reasonable distance between yourself and others and keeping the time you are close to others to a minimum. Our doctor should review the following instructions with you and answer all of your questions. It is important to let our doctor know if you will not be able to follow all of these instructions.

These instructions apply if you are returning to your own home after treatment using private transportation. You should ask our doctor for additional instructions if you are planning to use public transportation or stay in a hotel or other non-private lodging.

First 8 Hours:

- Drink one glass of water each hour and use the bathroom as soon as possible when you need to empty your bladder. Men should sit on the toilet while urinating to decrease splashing. Use a tissue to wipe up any urine on the toilet bowl and flush twice. Wash your hands and rinse the sink.
- Maintain a distance of at least 1 metre from all people. If possible, you should drive home alone. If it is not possible to drive alone, you should choose the seat that keeps as much distance as possible between you and the other passengers. You should not use public transportation.

First 2 Days:

- Do not share cups, glasses, plates or eating utensils. Wash items promptly after using. Other people may use items after they are washed.
- Do not share towels or washcloths.
- Flush the toilet twice and rinse the sink and tub after use.
- Wash your towels, bed linens, underwear, and any clothing stained with urine or sweat.

First Week:

- Arrangements should be made for others to provide childcare for infants and very young children.
- Sleep alone for 7 days unless otherwise instructed by your doctor.
- Avoid kissing and extended physical contact with others, and maintain a distance of at least 1 metre from women who are pregnant and children under 18 years old.
- Avoid activities where you may be close to others for more than 5 minutes, for example, movie theatres, sporting events and public transport.

In the following tables 'minimise close contact' means that the patient should avoid spending more than 15 minutes a day within 1 metre of another person and should attempt to maintain distances greater than 2 metres whenever possible (including while sleeping).