



Lee N. Metchick, M.D., F.A.C.E.

109 W. Knapp Avenue
Edgewater, FL 32132

210 Rinehart Road, Suite 1000
Lake Mary, FL 32746

ph: 386-427-4544 • 407-691.3200 fax: 386-427-8688

GUIDELINES FOR PATIENTS RECEIVING RADIOACTIVE IODINE FOR TREATMENT OF HYPERTHYROIDISM

You will receive a capsule of radioactive iodine for treatment of your overactive thyroid. Radioactive iodine has been used for the treatment of hyperthyroidism for over 70 years. With the extensive use and numerous clinical studies it is widely accepted as a safe, effective treatment, that carries very little risk.

Most of the radioiodine not collected by your thyroid gland will be eliminated from your body the first 3 days after your treatment in the urine and saliva.

The amount of radioiodine in your body during the treatment is small. Although there is no evidence that the radiation from this amount of radioiodine will cause any problem, it makes sense to take steps to minimize exposure to others, no matter how small. If you take simple precautions during the first few days after your treatment (as explained below), you can reduce or eliminate the possibility of radiation exposure to others.

1. **DISTANCE**: The greater the distance you are from others, the less radiation they will receive. Even an increase in distance of a few feet will greatly reduce the exposure.
 - a. **Children**: maintain a distance of 6 ft. (1.8m) for 3 days. If you are unable to comply with the, please make the necessary arrangements for child care.
 - b. **Pregnant Women**: Avoid contact for 10 days
2. **TIME**: Radiation exposure to others depends on how long you remain close to them. Avoid spending more than 2 hours within 6 ft (1.8m) of non-pregnant adults.
3. **HYGIENE**: Good hygiene minimizes the possibility that other people will be contaminated with the radioiodine that leaves your body. Since most of the radioiodine leaves your body in urine, good toilet hygiene and careful and thorough washing of your hands will reduce the possibility of contamination.

*****AVOID*****

1. Pregnant Women (10 days)
2. Commercial travel on airplanes (5 days)
3. Public transportation (3 days)
4. Intimate contact (3 days)
5. Sharing toothbrushes, utensils, dishes or towels

We have outlined some of the most common questions and answers about the treatment. Please feel free to ask for any further information.

1. **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE TREATMENT?**

Radioactive iodine is considered one of two definitive therapies for hyperthyroidism (the other being surgery). The goal of this treatment is to destroy hyperfunctioning thyroid tissue. The treatment will decrease the activity of your thyroid gland to normal or low levels. This occurs because the radioactive iodine is concentrated in the thyroid where it reduces thyroid tissue only.

2. **HOW QUICKLY WILL THE TREATMENT WORK?**

This varies, but usually improvement is seen in 6-18 weeks, but the full effect may not be seen for months. Thyroid activity may continue to decrease for years after treatment.

3. **ARE THERE ANY RISKS OF THE TREATMENT?**

- a. Radiation thyroiditis (1% of treated patients). A painful inflammation of the thyroid, which can lead to a temporary worsening of the hyperthyroidism symptoms, due to destruction-mediated release of preformed thyroid hormone. Usually only lasts days to weeks. Notify our office if you get these symptoms as treatment with anti-inflammatory drugs may alleviate the symptoms.
- b. Some people feel dryness in their throat or soreness in the front of their neck during the first few days after treatment. This will go away on its own.
- c. On occasion, the dose of radioactivity given is not adequate enough to lower thyroid function adequately. In these situations we simply repeat the treatment.
- d. There is a significant chance (80-90%) of developing an underactive thyroid. This may occur in the first year after treatment or at any time over the years. It is therefore especially important that you maintain

regular follow-up with your doctor. If an underactive thyroid does occur, it is easily managed by taking a daily thyroid pill.

- e. Although the nature of the risk to a baby is not clear, you should not have the treatment if you think you are pregnant or if you plan to conceive a child in the next few months.

4. **HOW LONG WILL THE RADIOACTIVITY REMAIN IN MY BODY?**

Any radioactivity not stored in the thyroid is eliminated in the urine and stool, and to a lesser extent in the saliva and sweat. Most of this elimination occurs in the first 3 days.

5. **HOW SOON WILL IT BE SAFE TO BECOME PREGNANT OR TO CONCEIVE A CHILD?**

Although the nature of any risk is not clear, we recommend waiting approximately 6-12 months. Birth control should be exercised during the waiting period.

6. **WHAT FOLLOW-UP CARE WILL I NEED?**

IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU FOLLOW UP WITH OUR OFFICE REGULARLY AFTER THE TREATMENT. You will have an appointment at approximately 12 weeks after the treatment and then as needed. You should continue regularly scheduled visits to monitoring and evaluation of your thyroid status.

7. **WHAT SHOULD I DO TO MINIMIZE THE EXPOSURE OF OTHERS TO THE RADIOACTIVITY THAT I'VE RECEIVED?**

Although the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has no requirements in this regard, it is prudent to keep the exposure of others to a level as low as **REASONABLY** achievable. Of course, what is reasonable for some families may cause hardship in others, so that your common sense should guide you in deciding how closely you can follow the guidelines. Please remember that children and pregnant women may be especially sensitive to radiation and that you should pay particular attention to minimizing the time spent with them in the first week. Also note that the radioactivity is eliminated in the urine, stool, saliva, and breast milk and exposure of others to these should be avoided.

We recommend the following guidelines:

FOR THE FIRST 3 DAYS AFTER TREATMENT:

- A. MAINTAIN A DISTANCES NOTED ABOVE
- B. MINIMIZE THE TIME SPENT NEAR OTHER PEOPLE
- C. DRINK PLENTY OF FLUIDS
- D. AVOID SHARING TOWELS OR CIGARETTES
- E. IF POSSIBLE, HAVE SOLE USE OF A BATHROOM
- F. WASH THE SINK AND TUB AFTER USE
- G. WIPE THE TELEPHONE WITH A CLEAN CLOTH AFTER USE
- H. AVOID PREGNANT WOMEN AND YOUNG CHILDREN.
- I. IF YOU ARE BREAST FEEDING, DISCONTINUE UNTIL YOUR DOCTER SAYS THAT YOU MAY RESUME.
- J. DO NOT KISS ANYONE OR HOLD ANY INFANT OR SMALL CHILD
- K. FLUSH THE TOILET TWO TIMES (WITH THE LID DOWN) AND WASH YOUR HANDS CAREFULLY AFTER EACH TIME YOU USE THE TOILET
- L. IF YOU PREPARE FOOD FOR OTHER PEOPLE, WEAR RUBBER GLOVES WHILE DOING SO.
- M. WHEN POSSIBLE, USE DISPOSABLE ITEMS
- N. WASH YOUR DISHES SEPARATELY FROM THOSE OF OTHERS IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD FOR THIS PERIOD OF TIME.
- O. DO NOT SLEEP IN THE SAME BED WITH ANYONE ELSE FOR THE NEXT FIVE NIGHTS.