

## **Nuclear Medicine**

# **Information for Patients before their Thyroid Ablation (Radioiodine) Therapy**

### **What is this leaflet for?**

This leaflet is for answering your questions about Radioiodine Thyroid Ablation Therapy. Your doctor may have recommended you for this treatment. Please read the information and call us if you have any questions. We would be happy to answer them. Our number is at the end of this leaflet.

### **What is radioiodine therapy?**

Radioiodine therapy involves swallowing a small capsule that contains a radioactive form of iodine. Your thyroid gland naturally absorbs this iodine. Over several weeks, the radiation shrinks your thyroid tissue. Any leftover radioiodine leaves your body mainly through urine, and a small amount through other body fluids. The capsule doesn't have any taste. It may contain gelatine, which comes from animal products.

### **What are the side effects?**

You're not expected to have serious side effects from your treatment. You might not have any side effects at all, but you could experience feeling sick, having a dry mouth, or neck swelling after the treatment.

Being exposed to ionising radiation can also increase your lifetime risk for secondary cancer in the future. If your doctor recommends this treatment for you, they'll carefully consider these risks to make sure the benefits of the treatment outweigh them. If you want to talk about this more, please ask your doctor.



### **What about reproduction?**

You must not have radioiodine if you are pregnant or if there is any chance you might be. Please contact the department if you think you are. On the day of the treatment, you will be asked to confirm this, and may be asked to take a pregnancy test (where you provide a urine sample). After the treatment, you must not become pregnant for six months.

After treatment radioiodine might be in semen. So, for four months after your treatment you should not try to have a baby or donate sperm. During this time, you need to use reliable protection methods during sex.

### **What if I am breastfeeding?**

You must not have radioiodine if you are breastfeeding. You must stop breastfeeding your child 8 weeks before the treatment and you must not restart. Please contact the department if you are breastfeeding. We will be able to give you more advice.

### **What happens before the treatment?**

Your doctor will tell you to stop taking your thyroid medication before the treatment **or** to get two Thyrogen injections before the treatment.

You'll also need to follow a low iodine diet for a week before the treatment. You can see the patient information leaflet "Low Iodine Diet – a one-week diet" for more information. It is best to avoid cough medicines, "health" foods and fish before treatment, as these contain iodine. Some drugs such as Amiodarone also affect iodine uptake and should be avoided before treatment.

Avoid any procedures or scans with iodine contrast for three months before your treatment.

### **What happens during the treatment?**

You'll need to come to the hospital the day before your treatment. Your treatment will either be on Tuesday, Thursday, or Friday. Then, depending on the dose, you will either stay overnight or over the weekend. You'll stay in a private room with your own bathroom once you've had the treatment.

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You should bring with you a spare set of clothes to go home in, and store these in the room with you. You will have to leave behind any items that become contaminated, such as nightwear, clothes, toiletries and magazines, so only bring with you items you are happy to leave. Items such as glasses, hearing aids and medication, which are personal to you, will be okay to take home.

Before your treatment there may be some investigations carried out by your doctors. On the day of your treatment, we will go through some checks with you to make sure everything is okay to go ahead. You will then be asked to swallow the small radioiodine capsule with some water. After you've had the capsule, we'll ask you not to eat anything for an hour. After that you will be able to eat and drink as normal.

You should drink lots of water during your stay and shower regularly. You must keep good hygiene. Please sit down when you use the toilet, flush twice once you have been, and then wash your hands thoroughly.

### **What happens after the treatment?**

After the treatment, you must stay in your hospital room until you've been discharged. You will not be allowed to leave the room. No visitors are allowed.

Before you leave, we'll check how much radioiodine is still in your body. If it's above a certain level, you will need to stay longer. We'll also check your belongings for any contamination. If they're contaminated, you'll need to leave them behind.

You will be given a yellow 'Radiation Information' card that contains restrictions to follow after your treatment.

### **What should I do after I leave the hospital?**

You can travel home alone, either driving or walking. You can travel by private car, or taxi as the only back seat passenger for journeys less than an hour. You can travel by public transport if the journey time is less than an hour. You must not travel with children or anyone who is pregnant.

## Patient Information

You must follow the following precautions when you leave the hospital for a specific number of days. Restrictions for adults and children over the age of 5 will apply for up to 16 days, and for children under the age of 5 and pregnant individuals they will apply for up to 28 days.

- You must always carry the Radiation Information card with you. This is in case of an emergency.
- You must avoid being close (less than 1 metre) from other people for more than 15 minutes a day.
- You must sleep in your own bed separate from anybody else.
- You must not go to work or volunteer.
- You must not go to any public places such as cinemas, restaurants, or gyms, where you may spend a long time close to somebody else.
- You must use your own crockery, cutlery, and glasses. You must not share these until they have been thoroughly washed.
- You must use your own towels, linen, and toiletries. You must not share these until they have been thoroughly washed.
- You must maintain good hygiene. You must sit down when you use the toilet, flush twice once you have been, and wash your hands thoroughly.
- You must avoid journeys with other people that will last longer than an hour.

After your treatment, there is a chance that you may set off radiation alarms at airports, transport hubs, or at large public venues for up to three months. You should take your yellow-card and appointment letter with you to these places if you are planning to go to them.

### **Will I have a follow up appointment?**

Yes, you will have an appointment for a scan in Nuclear Medicine between 5 – 10 days following the treatment. You will also have an appointment from the doctor who referred you for the treatment to discuss your response to the treatment.

### **What else do I need to know?**

Please contact us if:

- you are pregnant or breastfeeding,

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- you have a problem with incontinence or vomiting,
- you don't live in your own private home (such as a care home) or you receive nursing care at your home,
- your partner or carer provides essential care for you,
- your home has a septic tank,
- you cannot follow any of the restrictions described in this letter.

### What if I still have questions?

If you have any questions or concerns, we're here to help. Call the person who referred you for this treatment or call Nuclear Medicine on 02476 96 8212.

The Nuclear Medicine department is open: **Monday to Friday: 09:00 to 17:00.**

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 024 7696 8212 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

### Did we get it right?

We would like you to tell us what you think about our services. This helps us make further improvements and recognise members of staff who provide a good service.

Have your say. Scan the QR code or visit:

[www.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback](http://www.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback)



#### Document History

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