Radioactive Iodine Treatment for Hyperthyroidism

Information for patients and families

Read this information to learn:

• what radioactive iodine treatment is
• how to prepare
• what to expect
• instructions to follow after your treatment

Your radioactive iodine treatment (outpatient therapy dose from 6mCi to 15mCi) has been scheduled for:

Date: ________________________________

Time: ________________________________

Medical Imaging Reception
Toronto General Hospital
585 University Ave.
First floor, Peter Munk Building
What is radioactive iodine treatment?

Your doctor has recommended radioactive iodine treatment to treat your hyperthyroidism. Sodium iodide I-131 is a radioactive form of iodine. This means it sends out radiation (a kind of energy) over a short distance.

Your thyroid gland takes iodine from your blood to make thyroid hormone. Because of this, we are able to treat certain thyroid problems with radioactive iodine. It destroys only the tissue that takes in the iodine and doesn’t affect the tissue around it.

How do I prepare for the treatment?

- Have a light meal 1 and a half to 2 hours before your appointment.
- Remember to bring your health card (OHIP). If you do not have an OHIP card, please bring another form of government-issued photo ID (such as a driver’s license, passport, or other provincial health card).
- If you haven’t registered, come to Toronto General Hospital 30 minutes before your appointment. Go to Patient Registration on the Ground floor near the Elizabeth Street entrance.
- Check in at the Medical Imaging Reception on the first floor of the Peter Munk Building 15 minutes before your appointment.
- Please call the Nuclear Medicine department at 416 340 3311 if you are going to be late or need to cancel your appointment.

For women:

If you are between 10 and 55 years old, we will do a pregnancy test before we give you radioactive iodine. Radioactive iodine can harm an unborn baby.

If you are breastfeeding, you will have to stop before your therapy. Do not restart. You will be able to breastfeed any future children you may have.
**What can I expect?**

1. You will go to The Nuclear Medicine department for your treatment. It is on the first floor of the hospital, near the East elevators (EB1-408).

2. The Nuclear Medicine technologist will explain the procedure to you. They will talk to you about the possible side effects. They will also give you instructions for after your therapy. Please feel free to ask any questions.

3. They will give you the radioactive iodine in a pill that you will swallow. A lot of the iodine will go to your thyroid gland. The rest will slowly come out over a few days through your urine, saliva and sweat.

4. The radioactive iodine that comes out of your body can be harmful to others if you touch them or come near them. We will give you a list of instructions to follow after your therapy. Please follow these instructions to avoid exposing other people or things to the radioactive iodine.

**Important instructions to follow after your treatment:**

- Don’t have anything to eat for 1 hour. Clear fluids are OK.
- If you vomit within 12 hours of swallowing the iodine, call your doctor. This could affect your treatment.

**For 48 hours after your treatment:**

- Drink extra fluids and empty your bladder often.
- Flush the toilet twice after each use.
- Wash your hands very well with soap and water after going to the washroom and often throughout the day.
- Males should sit on the toilet while emptying their bladder to avoid splashing.
- Suck on hard candy or lemon slices during the first 24 hours after treatment. This will help you with the flow of your saliva.
- Separate your bath towels, face cloths, cutlery, and dishes from the rest of the family. Wash these items last and separately.
- Don’t return to work for 2 days if you work closely (less than 1 metre) to others.

- **For 5 days after your treatment:**
  - Sleep alone.
  - Avoid long periods (longer than 15 minutes) of close contact with children under 12 years old or pregnant women.

**What can I expect after treatment?**

You may have symptoms including sore throat or difficulty swallowing. This is normal and will improve over time. It may take **3 to 6 weeks** before you notice any improvement in your hyperthyroid symptoms.

| Women should wait 6 months before starting a pregnancy and men should wait 2 months before fathering a child. |

**If you have any questions or concerns, please call your doctor.**