

Radioactive Iodine Treatment for Thyroid Cancer

Instructions for patients who will get I-131 therapy, with a dose of less than 30 mCi

Learn about:

- What radioactive iodine treatment is
- How to prepare
- What to expect
- What to do after treatment

Please call the Nuclear Medicine department at 416 340 3311 if:

- you need to cancel or reschedule your appointment
- you are going to be late



What is radioactive iodine treatment?

Radioactive iodine is a substance that gives off radiation. It is used to treat thyroid cancer. Your health care provider will provide you with a capsule, or in some cases a liquid, which you will swallow and it will be absorbed by any remaining thyroid tissue. The radioactive iodine kills both normal thyroid cells and thyroid cancer cells.

How do I prepare for the treatment?

- Have a light meal 1½ to 2 hours before your appointment.
- If you are of child bearing age and can become pregnant, we will need you to do a urine pregnancy test so try to come to the appointment with a partially full bladder. If you are pregnant, there are possible side effects to your unborn baby.
- If you are breastfeeding or chestfeeding, stop **before** therapy. Do not start again when the treatment is finished.
- Your doctor MAY give you a low iodine diet to follow for a few days before the treatment. Your doctor will let you know if this is needed.

Where do I go?

Toronto General Hospital – 200 Elizabeth Street

If you have not registered at University Health Network:

- please come 30 minutes before your appointment
- go to Patient Registration (on the Ground Floor, near the Elizabeth Street entrance)

Then go to the Medical Imaging Department reception desk to check in:
1st floor, Peter Munk Building.

Check in 15 minutes before your appointment.

What happens during the treatment?

A health care provider will give you a capsule that contains the radioactive iodine. You will swallow the capsule. In some cases, it may be a liquid.

Then the health care provider will give you special instructions to follow. This is to protect other people and your home from the radiation.

What do I do after the treatment?

- Do not eat anything for 1 hour.
- Drink lots of clear fluids. Empty your bladder (pee) often for the first 48 hours.
- Suck on hard candy or lemon slices during the first 24 hours. This will help you with the flow of your saliva.
- Call the emergency numbers provided if you vomit within 12 hours of getting the therapy. This could affect your treatment.

For 7 days after your therapy:

- Continue to drink lots of fluids to avoid constipation.
- Flush the toilet twice after each use. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water. Sit on the toilet when emptying your bladder. This is to prevent any splashing, which will contaminate the area.
- Wash your cutlery, glasses and dishes separately from others.
- Keep your clothes, sheets, bath towels and face cloths separate. Do not mix them with those of the rest of the family. Wash these items separately.
- Sleep alone. Arrange for partners or children to sleep in other beds.
- Do not have sex or take part in any sexual activity.
- Limit close physical contact with others (stay at least 1 metre away). Limit contact especially with children under 12 years old or pregnant people.

What else do I need to know?

- You may have a sore throat or it may be hard to swallow.
- You can return to work when you like, as long as you can follow the instructions above.
- You can have sex again after 1 week. Make sure you use birth control if there is any chance of getting pregnant. You may want to talk to your doctor about effective birth control methods.
- Do not make someone pregnant for 2 months after having radioactive iodine treatment.
- For people who are able to become pregnant, do not become pregnant for 6 months after radioactive iodine treatment.
- If you were breastfeeding or chestfeeding, do not restart with this child. You can still plan to breastfeed or chestfeed other children that you may have in the future.
- You may also be able to see your results online through myUHN Patient Portal. Visit www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/myUHN to register.

Who needs to know if I have an emergency?

Call us right away if you have an emergency within 72 hours (3 days) of getting the therapy. The Radiation Safety Officer and the Nuclear Medicine Department need to know. They will help direct a safe response.

Get help right away if you have a medical emergency. Do not wait.

Numbers to call in an emergency

If you have a medical question:

- Monday to Friday
8:00 am to 5:00 pm → Call the Nuclear Medicine Dept.
at 416 340 4800 ext. 8562
 - After hours and
weekends → Page the radiologist on call
through Locating at 416 340 3155
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- Radiation Safety
24 hours → Page the Radiation Safety Officer
through locating at 416 340 3155



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