

Guidelines for Inpatients Receiving Radioactive Iodine (I-131) Treatment for Thyroid Cancer

Before your treatment begins, a Nuclear
Medicine Physician will review these
guidelines with you.

The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it
was given by the health care team.

Your appointments:

Date: _____ Time: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

This material has been
reviewed and approved by
patients, families and staff.



Conversion:
1 foot = 0.3 meter

What is radioactive iodine?

Radioactive iodine (sodium I-131) is a form of radiation treatment that has been used for many years to treat thyroid conditions. It is safe and effective but requires you to follow certain rules to decrease the small amount of radiation that other people may receive.

Radioactive iodine leaves your body primarily through urine but very small amounts can be found in the saliva, sweat and bowel movements. This means that, for a number of days after your treatment, everything that you touch could become contaminated with radioactive iodine. In order to prevent the spread of this contamination, you will be required to stay in a specially prepared hospital room for a few days.

Before your treatment

You will be provided with personalized guidelines to follow before you have your radioactive iodine treatment. These *may* include:

- Following a low iodine diet.
- Stopping some medications.
- Making child care arrangements.
- Arranging time away from work for **3 days** following your treatment.
- Adjusting travel plans.
- Being sent for a pregnancy test.
- Make preparations to stop breastfeeding.

On the day of your treatment, you will not be allowed to eat or drink for **2 hours before** and **2 hours after** your treatment. Consider planning your meals accordingly.

Personal items allowed during your hospital stay

If necessary, you are allowed to bring personal items:

- Medical devices (e.g. glucose monitors)
- Personal cellphone or laptop
- Slippers

DO NOT share these items with anyone for the first week after your treatment.

It is not necessary bring extra clothing. You will be provided with hospital clothing during your stay.

While in hospital

- **You must stay in your room.** Remaining in your room prevents the spread of radioactive iodine and unnecessary radiation exposure to others.
- This treatment should not cause you to feel sick.
 - If you experience nausea, contact the nursing staff immediately. You may be given anti-nausea medication (e.g., Gravol[®]).
 - If you have to vomit, use the toilet. If you cannot get to the toilet, use the trash can in the room. Contact the nursing staff immediately.
- Some equipment and furniture in your room will be covered with disposable materials for easy cleaning.
- Nursing and other health care personnel will attend to your needs. They will be taking extra precautions such as wearing gloves and other protective gear. They will not spend extra time in your room.

Drinking fluids during your stay

Most of the extra radioactive iodine is eliminated in your urine. Drinking extra fluids and emptying your bladder frequently will lower the amount of radiation exposure to your bladder.

Start drinking extra fluids **2 hours** after your treatment and continue for the next **2 days**.

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A small amount of radioactive iodine will be in your saliva. Sucking on sour candy may help increase saliva so the radioactive iodine can leave your body faster.

May I have visitors while in the hospital?

We recommend that you do not have visitors for the first **24 hours** after your treatment.

Children and pregnant visitors are not allowed.

If you must have visitors, the following restrictions will be in place during your stay:

- Visitors must be over 18 years of age
- Visitors must stay at the doorway and at least **2 meters** (or 6 feet) from you
- Visitors must limit visits to less than 1 hour per day

How long do I stay in the hospital?

- You will need to stay in the hospital for **2 to 4 days**. The length of time you stay in the hospital depends on the amount of radioactive iodine you receive and how your body responds.
- You may be able to speed up the process by drinking a lot of fluids and voiding frequently.
- Nuclear Medicine staff will monitor your body's radiation level. When the radiation level is low enough, you will be sent home.
- Before going home, you should take a final shower and change into your personal clothes.

Personal hygiene while in the hospital

- You will be given hospital clothes to wear during your hospital stay.
- Please only bring disposable items for your personal hygiene such as toothbrush and toothpaste. When you are discharged, you will not be allowed to take them home.
- Since your skin may have radioactive iodine on it, you should shower 1 to 2 times a day and wash your hair at least once a day. You should put on fresh hospital clothing after every shower.
- Flush the toilet 2 to 3 times after each use to help reduce the amount of radioactive iodine present.
- Male patients should sit when using the toilet to avoid splashing.

Meals during your hospital stay

- All meals will be brought to your room. Disposable trays, dishes, and utensils may be used.
- It is not necessary to follow a special diet unless specified by a physician.
- All *soft leftover food* (such as mashed potato, soup, oatmeal, etc.) should be flushed down the toilet.
- All leftover food that cannot be flushed down the toilet (hard or large food items such as bones, bread crust) should be placed into the garbage in your room.

- All disposable utensils such as paper plates, forks, knives, and spoons should be placed into the garbage in your room.
- All waste will be picked up by Nuclear Medicine staff after you are discharged from the hospital.

Guidelines to follow after you are discharged

At the time you leave the hospital, a small amount of radioactive iodine will remain in your body. Therefore it is important to follow these guidelines at home.

Time and distance

Radiation exposure to other people can be reduced by increasing the distance between yourself and others and decreasing the time you are close to them.

Around children and pregnant women maintain a distance of **6 feet** away for **5 days**. Around others, maintain a distance of **6 feet** away for **3 days**.

It is best if you:

- Stay at home as much as possible.
- Not go to the theatre or any event where you would be close to people.
- Not sit right beside someone on a couch or in a vehicle.

Brief contact such as shaking hands or hugging are okay. Avoid kissing or having sex for **3 days**.

Home guidelines

Good hygiene and frequent cleaning is very important to lower exposure to others.

Follow the instructions below for **3 days**.

Hygiene:

- Wash your hands with soap and plenty of water frequently and rinse sink after use. Do not share towels or washcloths.
- Use a separate toilet. Keep the toilet and surrounding area clean.
- Men should sit on the toilet while urinating to avoid splashing.
- Use toilet paper to wipe up any urine on the toilet bowl and after each use flush 2 to 3 times with the lid closed.
- Have at least 1 shower a day and rinse the shower after use. No baths.

Clothes, bedding and towels:

- Wash your clothes, bedding and towels separately.
- When your home guidelines have ended, wash all your items before sharing with other people.

Sleeping

You should sleep alone for a minimum of **3 days**. After **3 days** you are allowed to share the same bed only with your primary caregiver. For all other persons you are not allowed to share a bed with them for **1 month** after your treatment.

Travelling

Radioactive iodine will be detected by radiation monitors at border crossings for up to **4 months** after treatment.

- You will be provided with documentation of your radioactive iodine treatment. This document will not guarantee entry into other countries (e.g. USA) but will provide proof of medical treatment if requested by border guards.
- Radiation monitors may also be located at airports, government buildings, and waste disposal sites.
- Bring your documents with you and allow yourself extra time to get through security checks when travelling.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

Radioactive iodine treatment will not be given during pregnancy or while breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding after radioactive iodine treatment could result in permanent damage to the thyroid of the nursing child. **Do not** resume breastfeeding after your treatment. You may safely breastfeed after future pregnancies.

Avoid becoming pregnant or fathering a child for **6 months** after having radioactive iodine treatment. This will ensure you could receive an additional treatment if your illness reoccurs.

Guidelines for family and caregivers at home

The radiation received by the patient will be beneficial to them. The small amount of radiation received by family members and caregivers can be reduced further by following these additional guidelines for **3 days**:

- Increase distance and decrease time spent close to the patient as much as possible.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water.

If you have questions or need to cancel your appointment, please call the location where you are having this treatment.

Abbotsford Regional Hospital 604-851-4868
32900 Marshall Road, Abbotsford

Burnaby Hospital 604-412-6125
3935 Kincaid St, Burnaby

Peace Arch Hospital 604-535-4584
15521 Russell Ave (main floor),
White Rock

Royal Columbian Hospital 604-520-4436
330 E Columbia St, New
Westminster

Surrey Memorial Hospital 604-585-5554
13750 96 Ave, Surrey

St. Paul's Hospital 604-806-8008
1081 Burrard St, Vancouver

BC Children's Hospital 604-875-2129
4480 Oak St, TACC Building (1st
Floor), Vancouver

Lions Gate Hospital 604-984-5780
231 15th St E, North Vancouver

Richmond Hospital 604-244-5104
7000 Westminster Hwy, Richmond
Ext: 4

Vancouver General Hospital 604-875-4111
899 West 12th Avenue, Jim Pattison
Pavilion South Building (ground
floor), Vancouver
Ext: 63813

