

**RADIOIODINE TREATMENT FOR THYROTOXICOSIS- YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED****Why do I need treatment?**

You have been referred for possible treatment for an overactive thyroid gland, a condition known as thyrotoxicosis. Without treatment, your future health may suffer. There are three treatment options available, surgery, drugs or radioiodine, which the consultant will discuss with you.

The following information applies to **radioiodine treatment**, which the Consultant may feel is the most appropriate for you. **PLEASE READ IT CAREFULLY**

The consultant will be happy to answer any queries that you may have at your appointment. Following this a treatment date will be arranged.

**What is radioiodine treatment?**

You will be given a capsule containing radioactive Iodine-131 to swallow with some water. Some of the radioiodine will concentrate in your thyroid and the rest will pass out in your urine over a few days.

**Please advise us as soon as possible if you have**

- **difficulty in swallowing capsules or pills or**
- **any problems with incontinence to any degree**

**Radioiodine treatment cannot be given to pregnant women.** A pregnancy test may therefore be required for female patients in the 12-55 age group unless medical history confirms no possibility of pregnancy (e.g. current period, hysterectomy, sterilisation, post-menopausal)

**Female patients who think they might possibly be pregnant or are trying to become pregnant must notify us immediately by phone. It is also important to avoid becoming pregnant for six months after treatment. Male patients should avoid fathering children for four months.**

**Breast-feeding mothers will need to stop breast-feeding or postpone their treatment. There are also restrictions on contact with young children (see below).**

**We are unable to treat patients who are in residential/care homes without special prior arrangements.**

**Is there any preparation for the treatment?**

Yes. There are sources of iodine that may interfere with your treatment. These include **fish and other seafood, cod liver oil, glace cherries, iodised rock or sea salt, watercress, Complan, Sanatogen and TCP.** Some brands of the following products may contain iodine: **tinned spaghetti, hair rinses and dyes, vitamin preparations and ointments, throat pastilles, cough mixtures and dairy cleansing products.** A food colouring, E127, in red tinned fruit and some tinned prepared meat products also contains iodine.

**WE WILL TELL YOU WHEN TO CHANGE YOUR DIET ONCE THE DECISION TO TREAT YOU IS MADE.**

**You will also need to avoid the above products for a further 7 days after treatment.**

Please also notify us if you have had **kidney X-rays or a CT scan** for which you had an **injection** (which may contain iodine) **in the last four months.**

**What about out my current tablets?**

You should continue to take these until you are seen by the consultant who will tell you when to stop them, if necessary. Only anti-thyroid medication may need to be stopped. You should continue to take all other prescribed medication.

**Are there any side effects?**

No. Radioiodine has been used for over 60 years with no short or long term side effects with the one exception that your thyroid may become under-active after your treatment. This may happen after a few months or several years. Any under-activity is easily corrected with Thyroxine tablets, which have no side effects and need be taken only once a day.

**PTO**

Current version by	Digital Signature 1	Released by	Digital Signature 2	Review date: 16/03/2011
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### Will I need to see a doctor after the treatment?

Yes. Our consultant will write to your own GP explaining about your treatment and asking him to carry out monthly blood tests to check your thyroid function. You may also be seen regularly to check your progress. Although most people need only one treatment to cure their thyrotoxicosis, it is occasionally necessary to give one or two more treatments. The blood tests will show if further treatment is needed or if your thyroid is becoming under-active. Further treatments are not usually considered until we are sure that the first treatment has failed, usually after 4-6 months.

### Will there be any danger to my family?

No but, depending on the dose of radioiodine prescribed, you will need to observe the following restrictions on contact with family members. The actual periods for which the restrictions apply will depend on the prescribed dose and your individual circumstances. These will be discussed with you when you attend the department and confirmed in writing. This is to protect others from unnecessary exposure to radiation. As young children are more susceptible to its effects, the precautions involving them are more stringent.

### Young Children and Pregnant Women

You will need to avoid close contact (i.e. distances less than 1 metre) with children less than 3 years old and pregnant women for a period of **up to 4 weeks. The actual restriction period will depend of the dose of radioiodine given.**

It is difficult to provide adequate protection for children less than 3 years old, unless an alternative carer is available for the necessary period. We try to avoid radioiodine treatment if you are the main carer of a child under 3 years of age and cannot make alternative arrangements.

### Other family members

You will need to avoid close contact with children between 3 and 5 years for a period of **up to 22 days.**

You will also need to avoid close contact with children over 5 years and adults under 60 (including sharing a bed with your partner) for a period of **up to 16 days.**

**The actual restriction periods will depend of the dose of radioiodine given.**

### Pets

There is no evidence that radioiodine presents any hazard to pets

### Contamination

As some of the iodine will pass out in your urine, it is important that you take care when passing urine to avoid spillage outside the toilet bowl and flush the toilet twice **for the first 3 days**

**WE WILL BE HAPPY TO DISCUSS ANY PROBLEMS THAT THESE RESTRICTIONS MAY CAUSE YOU.**

### Can I go back to work?

You should stay off work for 2 days following your treatment. If your work involves close contact with others (1 metre away for more than 1 hour per day), a period of leave of up to 2 weeks may be needed.

Teachers and others working closely with children will need to take leave for up to 4 weeks depending on the dose of radioiodine and age of the children. This also applies if your work involves close contact with pregnant women.

### Are there any travel or other restrictions?

You can travel home by public or private transport after your treatment. Long journeys of over 1 hour should be avoided for up to 4 weeks depending on your family circumstances.

NB. If you are planning any air travel in the 3 month period after treatment, please let us know-you will need a letter to take with you confirming that you have been given radioiodine-this is because radiation monitors have been installed at some airports as an antiterrorist measure.

**IF YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS PLEASE DISCUSS THESE AT YOUR APPOINTMENT.**

**The Department of Nuclear Medicine can be contacted on 0845 1558202, fax 01752 517587**

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