

Special Instructions about Radioactive Iodine(¹³¹I) Treatment



UHN

Patient Education

Improving health through education

Information for Patients

Please visit the UHN Patient Education website for more health information: www.uhnpatienteducation.ca
© 2008 University Health Network. All rights reserved.

This information is to be used for informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Please consult your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition. A single copy of these materials may be reprinted for non-commercial personal use only.

Author: Dr. James Brierley

Created: 07/2008

Form: tbd

C034-A



University Health Network

Toronto General Hospital Toronto Western Hospital Princess Margaret Hospital

Going Home

When you are released from the hospital please follow these special instructions to limit radiation exposure to others.

For 7 days after your therapy...

- Continue to drink plenty of fluids to avoid constipation.
- Flush the toilet twice after each use, and wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water. Males should sit on the toilet when urinating.
- Wash eating utensils separately. This includes cutlery, glasses and dishes.
- Separate your linen, bath towels and face cloths from those of the rest of the family and wash these items separately.
- Sleep alone. Adopt separate sleeping arrangements for your partner and children.
- Refrain from sexual activity.
- Limit close physical contact (maintain a 1 meter distance) with others, especially children under 12 years old or pregnant women.

Additional instructions...

- Sexual activity may resume after one week, but an appropriate birth control method should be used.
- Do not become pregnant or father a child after Radioactive Iodine treatment for (6 months for women and 2 months for men). You may wish to discuss contraceptive methods with your family doctor.
- If you were breastfeeding, do not restart. You may still plan to breastfeed any other children that you may have.

- Showering 2 to 3 times a day and washing your hair will help to remove the excreted radiation through perspiration. Extra towels will be provided for you. Change your gown after each shower. Change your bed linen after your first shower on the day after your treatment.
- Frequent bowel movements are essential. You will be provided with a mild laxative on your first night. If you do not have a bowel movement within 24 hours of receiving the iodine capsules, contact your nurse.
- Place all soiled linen in containers provided.
- Ensure solid waste is placed in the grey waste plastic bag.
- **Do not pour any liquids into the waste plastic bag.**
- **Do not leave the room at any time, except if there is an emergency.**

What can I do during my hospital stay?

Many patients use these few days to rest, read, make telephone calls and relax. You may bring reading materials with you. Do not bring library books. If you bring books you wish to take home with you, gloves are provided to wear when handling. Televisions and telephones are available in each room, for an extra charge. Please do not bring any other electronic devices with you. If you have any questions, ask your nurse at the time of check in.

When can I go home?

You can expect to be in the hospital from 2 to 4 days. A Nuclear Medicine Technologist or Radiation Safety Officer will monitor your radiation level. When the radiation level is acceptable for release, you will be ready to go home. Before you leave the hospital you will be given instructions by your doctor on when to start thyroid hormone medication as well as a follow-up appointment. You will be given an appointment for a whole body scan for the following week.

Radioactive Iodine (¹³¹I) Treatment

Your doctor has recommended treatment with Radioactive Iodine. This requires a hospital admission and we hope that your stay at Princess Margaret Hospital will be pleasant.

Please read the following. If you have any questions, feel free to ask your doctor, RN case manager or the nurses on 18B. On arrival to the inpatient unit 18B you will be orientated to the floor and your room. A blood sample will be taken to test your thyroid function and thyroglobulin level.

If you are female it is important that you are not pregnant when you have iodine therapy. If there is a possibility you may be pregnant at the same time as your blood sample is taken you will have a pregnancy test before you are given radioactive iodine.

What is Radioactive Iodine?

Radioactive Iodine is a substance used to treat thyroid cancer and it gives off radiation. Radioactive Iodine goes to the thyroid gland area where it is absorbed by any thyroid tissue. It works to kill any remaining normal thyroid and thyroid cancer cells.

How is Iodine given?

The radioactive iodine is given in the form of one or more capsules, to be taken orally (by mouth) under the supervision of a physician. After taking the capsules, you will be asked to follow special instructions to reduce radiation exposure to others as well as to reduce radioactive contamination of the room.

How long will I stay in the Hospital?

The average hospital stay for the treatment is two days. It may be longer depending on how slowly your body eliminates the radioactivity.

A radiation warning sign will be put on your door after your treatment has begun. Items (personal or hospital-provided) that go into your room must remain there for the entire time that you are receiving treatment. Your personal belongings may become contaminated by radioactive iodine through body fluids such as saliva, sweat, and urine. Any contaminated belongings have to be discarded before you are discharged from hospital. Therefore, you should only bring personal items that are essential. You can bring an adequate supply of your own regular medications, toothpaste, soap and shampoo. Clothing you intend to wear when you are discharged can remain in the room closet and will not be contaminated unless you handle them after receiving the radioactive iodine.

What about visitors?

Visitors are not permitted while undergoing treatment. Please encourage family members to call you by phone.

How can I communicate with my Nurse?

Although your nurse will spend very little time in your room you can communicate frequently with your nurse by using the telephone. Your nurse will also check on you frequently by telephone to assess how you are doing. The telephone number of the nursing station will be provided to you when you arrive and is marked on your room telephone, and on the wall in your room.

How will I feel after I begin treatment?

Most patients do not feel anything unusual. You may experience mild swelling or soreness in the neck or jaw areas. You may experience nausea, or a change in the ability to taste food. Headaches or vomiting are unusual. These side effects go away with time. Contact your nurse if you vomit or are concerned about any symptom.

Meals and snacks

- On your admission you will have a low iodine diet for lunch, but don't eat it until at least 1 hour after you have been given the radioactive iodine. You can resume a regular diet by dinner.
- You will receive your meals on disposable dishes.
- Starting at least 1 hour after you have swallowed the capsule you should drink plenty of fluids and empty your bladder frequently.
- You should bring sour candies to suck on (not chewing gum) during your stay. Start the day after you have been given the radioactive iodine.

Daily activities

- Carry out as much of your personal care as possible. If you need assistance please call your nurse.
- Wear a hospital gown during your entire stay.
- Wear old socks and/or hospital slippers when out of bed.
- Use good hygiene habits, wash hands frequently.
- Use the toilet marked "Tank Toilet" and flush once after use. The other toilet will be padlocked.
- Male patients should sit when emptying their bladders to prevent any splashing, which will contaminate the surrounding area.