

# Procedure for radioiodine treatment

## Diabetes and Endocrinology Patient Information Leaflet

### Introduction

This leaflet is about radioiodine treatment for people who have an overactive thyroid gland. It gives information the benefits and risks of it; and what to do after the treatment.

### What is radioiodine treatment?

Radioiodine treatment uses a form of iodine that is radioactive. It shrinks the thyroid gland so that it cannot produce as much thyroid hormone.

### Where does the radioiodine go?

The radioiodine is taken up by the thyroid gland.

### What are the benefits of the treatment?

You have a condition called thyrotoxicosis. This means that your thyroid gland is overactive and produces too much thyroid hormone. If it is not properly treated, your health may be affected in the future. The dose of radioactivity used in the treatment is very low and is not harmful.

## **Is radioiodine treatment safe?**

Radioiodine has been used for over 40 years to treat thyrotoxicosis and patients treated this way have been studied carefully. This form of treatment is considered to be safe and effective.

## **Will I have any side effects?**

There are no known immediate side effects associated with the treatment.

## **Are there any long term effects?**

Radioiodine is a very safe treatment.

However, your thyroid gland may become under active after your treatment. This could happen within a few weeks, months or many years after treatment. That is why there are blood tests to check the function of your thyroid. These are important and should be taken regularly for the rest of your life.

If your thyroid becomes under active, we will give you thyroid treatment which only needs to be taken once a day.

## **Are there any risks in having children afterwards?**

There are no known effects on the health of children of patients who have had radioiodine treatment. However, we do ask you to avoid pregnancy, breastfeeding or fathering children for four months after radioiodine treatment.

## **Is there a risk to others?**

You will be given some simple precautions to follow when you attend for your treatment. These are merely to avoid passing on any unnecessary radiation to others. Please see section 'Precautions after radioiodine treatment' for more information.

## **What are the alternatives?**

Alternatives include taking tablets called thioamides which stop your thyroid gland from producing excess amounts of thyroid hormones; or surgery to remove all or part of the thyroid gland. Your consultant will discuss these alternatives with you.

## **How do I prepare for radioiodine treatment?**

You will need to stop taking any thyroid tablets seven days before radioiodine treatment.

## **What about my other medication?**

Your hospital doctor will give you instructions about the other medication you are taking.

## **How is the radioiodine given?**

You will need to swallow a capsule or a liquid containing the radioiodine. Radioiodine is colourless and tasteless.

## **How many radioiodine treatments will I need?**

Occasionally, a second treatment is necessary but not until a year after your first dose.

## **What do I need to do after my treatment?**

- You can start taking thyroid tablets seven days after the radioiodine treatment.
- You will need a blood test five weeks after having the treatment.
- You will need to return to the Endocrine Clinic six weeks after the treatment.

We will give you dates for these appointments when you have your treatment.

## **Precautions after radioiodine treatment**

The aim of these recommendations is to ensure that any radiation dose received by members of the public is as low as possible. After radioiodine is given, the following is recommended:

- Do not have close contact with children and pregnant women for a period of eight days. This means that you should keep a minimum distance of one metre from pregnant women and children whenever possible.

- In addition, you need to avoid extended periods of close contact for a period of 25 days. This means that you should not cuddle a child or pregnant woman for more than 15 minutes a day and should not sleep with a child or pregnant woman in the same bed for this period of time.
- On the day you have your treatment, do not sit for more than three hours next to someone on public transport.
- On the day you have your treatment, you should not sit next to another passenger or driver for longer than three hours in private transport, such as a car.
- You can return to work on the day after treatment but:
  - You can sit next to colleagues for up to eight hours but after this period of time you will need to sit more than two metres away. This is for a period of 25 days after the treatment.
  - You should tell your employer about your treatment as you should not work close to staff who are or who could be pregnant.
  - If your work involves food preparation, it is a good idea to tell your employer about the possibility of contamination and the need for precautions to avoid this.

## **Will I need to see a doctor after the treatment?**

You should be seen by your hospital doctor after treatment, and you will need to have blood tests taken. These are to check how your thyroid gland has responded to the treatment.

## **Can I find out more?**

We want you to understand what the treatment involves. If you have any other questions, please either ask when you are referred for the treatment, or you can contact your consultant by ringing their secretary via the hospital switchboard on 01384 456111.

You can also find out more about this treatment on the NHS Choices website:

[Overactive thyroid conditions](#)

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Diabetes and Endocrine Centre on 01384 244399 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

**This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:**

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/diabetes-and-endocrinology/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email [dgft.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:dgft.patient.information@nhs.net)

**This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.**

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Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta brosură poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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