



**KERNGENEESKUNDE / NUCLEAR MEDICINE
TYGERBERG HOSPITAAL / TYGERBERG HOSPITAL**



Tel: 021 938 4265 (results) 021 938 4268 (bookings) Fax: (021) 938 4694
www.sun.ac.za/nuclear

RADIO-IODINE THERAPY PATIENT INFORMATION

As you already know, you are suffering from a condition known as hyperthyroidism (overactivity of the thyroid gland). It has been recommended that you receive radioactive iodine (radio-iodine) to treat the hyperthyroidism.

Radio-iodine is absorbed by the thyroid, causing local radiation to the gland. In this way the overactive gland is treated. The thyroid function then usually normalizes.

The process of administration is very simple. You will receive an appointment to visit **Nuclear Medicine, Gold Avenue, 10th floor, Tygerberg Hospital**, telephone 021 938-4265, on a Thursday morning. The iodine will be given to you in the form of a capsule. Thereafter you will be able to return home. The whole process is almost as simple as taking a headache pill.

The date and time of your appointment should be strictly kept since a specific dose of radio-iodine will be ordered especially for you. This dose is only appropriate at a certain date and time.

No preparation is necessary before taking the capsule. Although you do not need to be fasting, a light breakfast is recommended on the morning of your visit.

You may be concerned about taking a radio-active substance. The aim of this pamphlet is to reassure you and to answer most of the commonly asked questions.

Radiation to yourself

Since most of the iodine concentrates in the thyroid gland, the radiation dose to the rest of the body is negligible. Careful evaluation of thousands of patients over several decades did not show any increase in cancer in the patients, or in birth defects in their children.

Radiation to other people

You may feel concerned about other people (possibly relatives) who may be exposed to unnecessary radiation should you come into close contact with them. If you prefer, it would not be unreasonable for you to avoid close contact during the first few days after taking the radio-iodine. We can, however, reassure you that the amount of radiation you will be exposing other people to, is negligible.

Pregnancy and lactation

It is not advisable to receive radio-active substances when either pregnant or lactating. If you are pregnant or have the slightest suspicion that you may be, or if you are breastfeeding a baby, you must please inform us before you receive your dose. It is also advisable that a patient who received radio-iodine, or the partner or wife of such a patient does not fall pregnant within 6 months after the treatment.

Medication

If you have been taking beta-blocking agents (e.g. Inderal[®], Pur-Bloka[®] etc.) for your hyperthyroidism, you must usually continue with these for 4-6 weeks after the radio-iodine. You will be advised about any other medication you may be taking. Please bring along all medication you are currently taking, for discussion with the doctor who is going to see you.

Follow-up

A follow-up appointment will be made for you at Nuclear Medicine, on either a Monday or Thursday morning, approximately 12 weeks after your treatment. On this occasion blood tests for thyroid function will be repeated to determine the effectiveness of the treatment. If you were referred by a private doctor, he/she will help with the further follow-up.

Expected course

In most cases thyroid function is restored to normal within a few weeks after radio-iodine therapy. In a few cases, however, the radio-iodine has to be repeated. In the majority of cases the patient may gradually, even after years, develop under-active function of the thyroid (hypothyroidism). To exclude this possibility further thyroid function tests are usually required, initially every 3-6 months, and later only every 1-2 years. If hypothyroidism should develop it can conveniently be controlled with replacement therapy (Eltroxin[®]).

We hope that this answers most of your questions. We are most willing to discuss any further questions you may have.

IF YOU ARE UNABLE, FOR WHATEVER REASON, TO KEEP YOUR APPOINTMENT, PLEASE NOTIFY US AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE AT TELEPHONE 021 938-4265.

[FIND US](#)

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

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