

Nucleaire geneeskunde



Treatment with Iodine 131

Everything you need to know about
the treatment

01

What is a treatment with Iodine 131?

Iodine 131 treatment is used to achieve normal thyroid function. The radioactive iodine is practically absorbed into your thyroid gland.

For several weeks, but in ever decreasing amounts, the radioactive iodine will irradiate the thyroid gland inside, which will normalise thyroid hormone production back to normal.

02

Course of treatment

Treatment takes place at the nuclear medicine department.

You should be sober four hours before the start of therapy and you should not eat until one hour after oral intake. Treatment consists of taking one capsule of Iodine 131 with a generous amount of water. After that, you may leave the hospital. It is important that you observe the precautions.

03

Duration of treatment

After intake, the radioactive iodine will irradiate your thyroid gland from the inside for about 10 to 12 weeks. Results can be expected from two to three weeks after intake.

04

Precautions after treatment

The presence of radioactive iodine in the thyroid gland is accompanied by a temporary emission of radioactive radiation. This makes it important to follow some guidelines to protect your environment.

- Until three days after taking the capsule, you should always urinate sitting down and immediately after urinating, flush the toilet twice and wash your hands thoroughly.
- Avoid direct contact with excreta (urine, stool, vomit and blood). Use disposable gloves if necessary. Put these together with the contaminated waste material (paper wipes, sanitary towels, panty liners) in a sealable plastic bag and wash your hands. Place this waste separately and only give it to the household waste round three weeks after treatment.

To protect other people:

- Radiation decreases sharply with distance. It is best to keep an arm's length distance from other people.
- Try to avoid crowded places where it is difficult to follow the distance rule.
- Keep at least two metres away when sleeping or doing other prolonged activities (such as eating or watching TV). Avoid intimate contacts with your partner.
- Delay any pregnancy until one year after treatment.
- Do not breastfeed for eight weeks after treatment.
- Limit contact with babies, small children and pregnant women at less than one metre to a maximum of 30 minutes a day.
- Contact with animals is not a problem.
- Consult with your doctor if you plan a trip or need to be hospitalised in the week after treatment.

You will not experience any major discomfort from the intake. Sometimes there is temporary sensitivity in the neck area, with some pain and swelling of the thyroid gland. This will go away by itself, but can be treated with ordinary painkillers if necessary. In rare cases, you may notice some blurred vision. If this should occur, contact your doctor.

There is a chance that thyroid function may drop below normal. This can be easily treated with thyroid hormones (usually one tablet a day).

One treatment may be insufficient to control thyroid function. A repeat treatment will then be necessary. Regular monitoring of thyroid function in consultation with your treating physician or GP is therefore strongly recommended.



Questions?

In the first instance, contact your GP. If the GP refers you or cannot be reached, you can contact:

nuclear medicine department
tel: 011 69 93 00



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