

Information on

# **Your Radioactive Iodine Treatment**

## **Nuclear Medicine Department**

### **Appointment Details:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Day: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Please stop taking:**

- ☐ Carbimazole      On: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Propylthiouracil      On: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Thyroxine      On: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Please start taking:**

- ☐ Prednisolone      On: \_\_\_\_\_

Your doctor would like you to have radioactive iodine treatment for your overactive thyroid. Your doctor will discuss your overactive thyroid condition, treatment options and their risks with you. This leaflet also provides information about the radioactive iodine treatment.

If you need help with any of the following please telephone the department.

- Sight, hearing or require an interpreter
- Mobility, specialised equipment or any other need

## **Do I need to do anything right away?**

Yes. If you are pregnant (or think you may be pregnant), or are breastfeeding, please phone us now.

If you are responsible for looking after small children or have small children at home, or you are a carer for someone, please contact our staff for information and any instructions required.

As you will be radioactive following this treatment, please let us know if you receive care or support which involves prolonged close contact. If this is the case, we will provide any instructions required.

## **What is an overactive thyroid gland and why does an overactive thyroid need treatment?**

The thyroid gland lies at the front of the neck, and uses iodine to make thyroid hormones. It is the main place in the body where iodine is used. If levels of thyroid hormones are too high (an overactive thyroid) it can cause symptoms such as palpitations, weight loss and feeling hot. The condition shows up on blood tests.

If untreated an overactive thyroid can be harmful over a long period of time and can cause heart problems and bone thinning.

## **How does the radioactive iodine treatment work?**

We will give you a capsule containing radioactive iodine to swallow along with a drink of water. The capsule has no taste. The radioactive iodine is taken up by the thyroid, and it destroys a large number of overactive thyroid cells. Your neck will remain slightly radioactive for several weeks after your treatment while the radioactive iodine takes effect.

## **Are there side-effects?**

Some patients notice a mild sore throat, or tenderness of the throat, after treatment, but this usually clears up after a few days.

Some patients have a slight increase in their overactive symptoms before the treatment has had its full effect. If you have any concerns your doctor can advise on this.

## **How long does the treatment take to work?**

It can take between a few weeks and several months for the treatment to work.

Most people with an overactive thyroid (80-90% people or 8 to 9 people out of 10) are no longer overactive following a single dose of radioiodine. However, some patients will become underactive which will require different treatment (please see the information below).

If the radioactive iodine treatment has not worked within six months, we can repeat it.

## **Will my thyroid become underactive after treatment?**

About 70% of patients (7 out of 10 patients) develop an underactive thyroid in the first year after treatment. It is possible that your thyroid will become underactive, so you must have regular blood tests to check how your thyroid is working. If your thyroid becomes underactive you may need to take thyroxine tablets every day.

## **Do I need to do anything before my Radioiodine treatment?**

You may be on thyroid medication such as Carbimazole, Propylthiouracil or a combination of one of these with Thyroxine before your treatment. You need to stop these before the treatment to allow the radioiodine to work. We will advise you when to stop your medication, and for how long, when arranging your Radioiodine treatment. A small number of patients need to start taking Prednisolone before their treatment. If you need this we will discuss this when arranging your Radioiodine Treatment.

## **How much radioactivity will I be given and why?**

Most patients receive between 400 and 600MBq. Your doctor will decide the amount you receive as this depends on many factors.

## **To reduce exposure to those around you, we advise you take the following simple precautions following your treatment:**

1. Return home using a private car or taxi (if possible).
2. Public transport is acceptable if your journey is under 1 hour.
3. Radioactivity will be present in your urine for 4 days – please wipe spilled or splashed urine immediately and always flush, washing hands afterwards. Men should sit to pass urine.
4. Radioactivity will be also be present in your saliva and sweat for 4 days - don't share cups or cutlery, avoid kissing and wash hands before preparing food for others.
5. We recommend that children are cared for by others for up to 25 days\*.
6. For up to 25 days\* avoid all close contact with children and pregnant women. Stay at least two arms lengths away at all time.

7. For up to 14 days\* avoid all close contact with adults. Stay at least two arms lengths away at all time. Please note if you share a bed with a partner additional restrictions also apply, see point 8 below.
  8. To reduce the radiation risk to a partner, in addition to the above advice, you should not share a bed with a partner for up to 22 days\*
- \* The number of day's restriction depends on how much radioactivity you are to be given. If you are to receive more than 600MBq the restriction dates will be longer than those listed here. We will give you specific restriction dates to follow when you attend for your treatment.

## **Do I need to do anything after the test?**

You can eat and drink as normal. We ask you to drink more than usual for a few days after your treatment. This is to help remove the radioactivity from your body. The rest will disappear naturally.

## **Radioiodine, pregnancy and fertility:**

To receive this treatment you must not be pregnant or breastfeeding. If you are pregnant (or think you may be pregnant), or are breastfeeding, please phone and tell us.

Before your treatment, we need to be as sure as possible that you are not pregnant. This is not necessary if you have had a hysterectomy. This will involve a pregnancy test and possibly giving the treatment within the 10 days after your period starts.

We advise women to avoid becoming pregnant for **at least 6 months** following treatment. Your doctor will discuss this with you before your treatment. Men should also avoid fathering a child for 6 months. The treatment does not affect your fertility.

## **When Can I Return to Work?**

This depends on your job. Most people will require a minimum of 3 days off work. This period may be extended to anything up to 25 days particularly if your place of employment

involves you working in close contact with other adults, or requires you to be around young children, young adults or people who are pregnant.

## **Radiation Risks**

Some patients are concerned about having radioiodine treatment due to the radiation involved. However, it is important to remember that Radioiodine treatment has a good safety record and has been given to millions of people since it was introduced in the early 1940s.

Large follow-up studies have been carried out for more than 70 years in many European countries and the United States. These show that there is an extremely small excess risk of cancer from treatment with radioactive iodine. For most patients the benefit of treating the overactive thyroid gland far outweighs the extremely low cancer risk and your medical team will have considered this. If you would like more information please discuss this with your doctor before treatment.

## **Other Points**

Please postpone non-urgent routine dental and GP appointments for 25 days following your treatment because of the radioactivity in your neck.

## **Follow up**

We will ask you to get a blood test for your thyroid about 6 weeks after treatment to check for any changes in your thyroid hormone levels.

## **Radiation detectors at airports and ports**

We don't recommend long journeys until 4 weeks after treatment. You may travel after this period but it is possible that you will set off radiation detectors in some ports and airports for up to 6 months after your treatment. If you intend to travel within 6 months of your treatment keep this document or the precaution card we give you on the day of your treatment as this includes our contact phone number.

## **Any more questions?**

One of the department's physicists or a member of the technical staff will be happy to discuss any further questions you have on the day of your treatment. If you have any questions before your appointment please contact the department – the telephone number is on your appointment letter.

## **Travel to Hospital by Patient Transport**

### **(Ambulance or Ambulance Car)**

A hospital or clinic appointment does not mean that you qualify for patient transport. If for medical reasons, you need this form of transport, you or your carer should arrange this. Please call the Scottish Ambulance Service on ☎ **0300 123 1236** at least 3 days before your appointment but no sooner than 30 days in advance. They will ask you a series of assessment questions to determine your need. Please tell the transport service how your appointment will last approximately 40 minutes (typically no longer than 1hr), if you don't there may be no ambulance available to take you home. If travelling by ambulance we will provide instructions to follow and to provide to your driver, please phone us before your appointment to let us know you will be travelling by ambulance.

Lines are open      8:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday to Friday and  
8:00 am to 1:00 pm on Saturday.

If you no longer need the ambulance or car please call the cancellation number on ☎ **0800 389 1333** as soon as possible before your appointment date and tell them your name, address, phone number, date of appointment, and hospital clinic you are attending. Please also call the Nuclear Medicine department to cancel your appointment if you no longer need it.

Please note they will only transport your escort or companion if absolutely necessary for your medical need.

## Travel Costs

Patients can claim their travel costs if they receive **Family Credit**, **Income Support** or are on a **Low Income**. Please ask staff for further information or directions to the cashier's office.

### Please note:

- Patient's must bring proof of entitlement e.g. a letter confirming entitlement to benefit, HC2 certificate, NHS Tax Credit Exemption Card, Asylum Registration Card (ARC).
- Bus or rail tickets will be required as evidence.
- We can reimburse the cost of petrol for patients using their car.
- In some cases the travelling costs of an escort can be claimed.
- Taxi fares will not be reimbursed.

All patients travelling from the Highlands and Islands are entitled to claim some or all of their public transport costs of travel.

## Parking

Please allow time to find a car parking space. Disabled parking spaces are available in the main car parks.

More information on hospital parking can be found on:

🌐 <https://www.nhsggc.scot/hospitals-services/visiting-hospital/transport-travel-and-parking-information-for-patients-and-visitors/car-parking/>

## Public Transport

For transport information (including timetables, journey planners and routes) visit 🌐 [www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com) or call ☎ **0141 465 1878**


For more travel information please visit

🌐 <https://www.travelinescotland.com/>



## Comments and Suggestions

We welcome comments and suggestions about any aspect of your attendance at the hospital.

Please speak with a member of staff or you can use our online feedback system,  <https://www.nhsggc.scot/contact-us/get-involved/share-your-feedback/>

You can also comment on Care Opinion

 [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk)

## Complaints

If you wish to complain then in the first instance speak with a senior member of staff. You can ask for a guidance leaflet which is available from all clinics.

You can also contact the Complaints Office on:

 0141 201 4500 or  [complaints@ggc.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints@ggc.scot.nhs.uk)

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