NHS
Greater Glasgow and Clyde

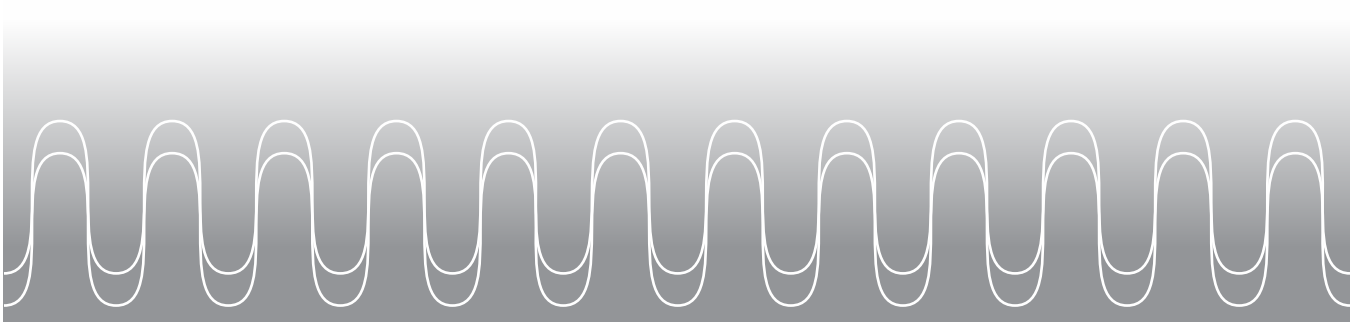
Advice for Carers and Comforters

Supporting patients who are undergoing Nuclear Medicine and PET-CT investigations.

Please follow the advice until

Date: _____

Time: _____



Why have I been given this information leaflet?

The patient you are accompanying is having a procedure that uses radiation, and for a short while after their procedure they will remain slightly radioactive.

As you are providing care or support to them, you will also receive a small amount of radiation.

Who is a Carer and Comforter?

- A 'Carer and Comforter' is a legal term which applies to someone who is exposed to radiation through the care and support they provide to someone undergoing a medical procedure using radiation.
- They are usually relatives or friends of the patient.
- To be a Carer and Comforter, you must understand the risks and benefits associated with your exposure and must be willing to go ahead.

Important things to tell the member of staff

It is important to tell a member of staff if you are:

- Pregnant
- Breastfeeding
- Under the age of 16 years
- If you have been a Carer and Comforter before during any investigation involving radiation.

If any of the above applies to you, then a member of staff will give you advice on how to minimise your radiation dose based on your individual circumstances.

What are the risks?

There are two risks that you should be aware of:

1. The patient will have some radiation in their body both during and after the procedure. If you get very close to them and do so shortly after they receive the radiation, you will receive some radiation too.
2. Some of the radioactivity will be cleared from their body through their bodily fluids. It will usually be in their urine, but may also be in their sweat, saliva, vomit, blood and stools. If you come into contact with these bodily fluids, there is a risk that the radiation could be spread to you.

Radiation Risks – Putting it in Perspective

As a Carer and Comforter, the small radiation dose you will be exposed to may lead to a very small increase in the chance of developing cancer in your lifetime. The risks are even lower for people who are older at the time of exposure.

To put this in context, we all receive radiation, known as 'background radiation', every day, from cosmic rays reaching the earth from space, radioactive minerals, certain foods, and naturally occurring radon gas. We receive higher amounts of radiation if we live in areas with higher radon levels, or if we take international flights.

The radiation levels you will be exposed to caring for the patient should not exceed what you would be exposed to naturally over a few hours to a few weeks, depending on the test.

How can I minimise my radiation dose?

There are three things you can do to minimise the amount of radiation you are exposed to:

Distance

- For the length of the restrictions, try to maximise the distance between you and the patient.
- This is best achieved by staying at least 1 metre away from the patient (imagine a shopping trolley distance between you and the patient).
- There may be occasions when you have to be closer to the patient but try to keep these periods of close contact to a minimum.

Time

- For the length of the restrictions, try to reduce the time you spend in close contact with the patient.
- We understand that there will be occasions when this will be difficult, but it is important that you keep this in mind.

Protective clothing

- If needed, we will provide you with protective clothing (e.g. gloves) which will help protect you when dealing with bodily fluids such as urine or vomit.
- If you get any bodily fluids on your skin, then simply wash your skin with soap and water to remove it.

If you follow this advice the risks from the radiation exposure you will be exposed to will be very low.

Who do I contact for more advice?

If you have any questions or want more information regarding radiation risks, please contact the Nuclear Medicine or PET-CT department you and the patient attended for the test. The contact number is provided on the appointment letter that was sent to the patient.