

# Nuclear Medicine Therapy for Thyroid Cancer

## General Information

You are receiving radioactive iodine (I-131) to treat your thyroid cancer. This therapy is usually done several weeks after you had surgery to remove your thyroid. The purpose of therapy is to kill any remaining thyroid tissue so the cancer cannot continue to grow.

You will receive a dose of radioactive iodine as a pill to swallow. Your intestines absorb the iodine. As the iodine travels through your bloodstream, it will be picked up by your thyroid cells.

This treatment will kill the leftover thyroid cells or tissues. After this therapy, you will have little or no thyroid tissue left.

Even if you have an allergy to iodine, this treatment is safe.

## What To Tell Your Doctor

Tell your doctor if you:

- are breastfeeding, pregnant or think you may be pregnant
- plan of getting pregnant in the next 6 months
- take any thyroid medicines
- have had any X-ray procedure that involved contrast in the last 6 to 8 weeks (These procedures include CAT or CT scans, heart catheterization, myelograms or intravenous pyelograms.)
- have had I-131 therapy
- have had thyroid surgery.

### Your Health Care Provider

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Before the Procedure

- Six to eight 8 before the procedure:
  - Do not have any X-ray procedure that involves contrast, including CAT or CT scans, heart catheterization, myelograms or intravenous pyelograms.
- Four weeks before the procedure:
  - Do not take Synthroid®.
- Three weeks before the procedure:
  - Do not take Cytomel® (anti-thyroid medicine).
- Two weeks before the procedure:
  - Do not take PTU (anti-thyroid medicine).
  - Do not eat kelp or other seafood that contains iodine (including sea salt).
- One week before the procedure:
  - Do not take any antihistamines.
- Two to 3 days before the procedure:
  - If you are a woman younger than age 50, you need to take a pregnancy test. You **must** have a negative test before you can receive the I-131. Fax, send or bring the results to the Nuclear Medicine or Radiology Department of the hospital.

**(over)**

## Day of the Procedure

- Do not eat or drink anything 1 hour before your appointment.
- You may take your needed medicine with small sips of water. (Do not take the medicines listed in “Before Your Procedure.”)
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing.

## During the Procedure

- A radiologist or technologist will talk with you about why you are having this therapy. He or she will give you instructions to follow for the first few days after therapy.
- You will swallow a pill that contains the radioactive iodine.

## After the Procedure

- Do not eat or drink anything 1 hour after your appointment.
- You will receive instructions for:
  - drinking extra liquids for 48 to 72 hours after your treatment
  - limiting contact with your friends and family for 48 to 72 hours (includes cooking, sleeping and being intimate)
  - limiting your contact with small children (newborns to age 5) and pregnant women for 1 week
  - seeing your doctor for a follow-up visit 4 to 6 weeks from the day of treatment
  - not getting pregnant for at least 6 months from the day of treatment.

## Side Effects

Below is a partial list of the side effects you may have with this medicine. You may have some, all or none of those listed. Most side effects last only a short time.

- You may have some pain and tenderness in your neck about 1 week after your treatment. You may soothe a sore throat by drinking extra liquids and using cough drops.
- Because your thyroid was removed and leftover thyroid cells were killed, you will need to take a thyroid medicine for the rest of your life. Your doctor will follow-up with you to make sure you are given what you need.
- Until you start taking the thyroid medicine, you may feel cold, weak, tired and have problems concentrating. This is normal.

## When To Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor if you vomit (throw up) within 3 hours of taking the pill and/or if you have severe side effects.

## Follow-up Results

Schedule a follow-up appointment with your doctor 4 to 6 weeks after your treatment.

If you have any questions or concerns,

call your doctor or: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.