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THYROID CANCER

Patient instructions following treatment with Radioactive Iodine-131 post total thyroidectomy

Part of your treatment at Nuclear Medicine involves giving you a radioactive drug. While this material will immediately start to disappear from your body - and will eventually all disappear - some of it will be left in your body after your treatment. As a result, your body will give off some radiation, like a hot object gives off heat. Although this radiation is not dangerous to the people around you, they do not need the radiation like you do. Therefore, it is important to minimize the amount of radiation they are exposed to by limiting the amount of time you spend around others, and also by limiting how close you get to others.

We have provided some basic guidelines, specific to your treatment, and we need you to follow these rules to help keep radiation exposure to those around you as low as possible. These precautions will usually need to be followed for between 1-3 days. During your treatment appointment, the Nuclear Medicine Team will be able to tell you *exactly* how long you will need follow these rules.

Travel

Avoid using public transportation (bus/train/airplane). If you are going home from the hospital by car with other occupants, we suggest you sit as far away from others as possible. Also, we suggest you delay traveling on extended trips (greater than 200 miles) in a car with other occupants for two days.

School or Work

Delay returning to school or work for as long as the Nuclear Medicine Team tell you to. If you absolutely cannot stay away from work this long, you should avoid close physical contact with coworkers for at least one day. Stay at least six feet from children or pregnant women in the work or school environment during this time.

Home

Keep your distance from visitors. They should stay more than six feet away from you, and you should avoid close physical contact (such as hugging, kissing, or sexual activity) with them. All visits must be brief (under two hours). If possible, arrange for your visitors to use a different restroom than the one you are using.

Most of the radioactive iodine will leave your body through your urine, but some will also come out through bodily fluids such as saliva, and sweat. You can help remove the radioactive material from your body:

- Drink plenty of fluids for the first two days after treatment. This will help flush the material from your body through your urine.
- Shower often during the first 48 hours after treatment to remove sweat and oils from your skin.

- Ensure that others do not touch items that your bodily fluids (urine, sweat, and saliva) have touched.
- Avoid prolonged, close physical contact, such as hugging or kissing. Avoid sexual activity.
- Brush your teeth, shower, and wash your hair often. To avoid splashing, be careful when using the toilet (men should sit down).
- Your spouse should sleep in a separate bed, if possible, ***especially if your spouse is pregnant.*** If this is not possible, adjust your sleeping arrangements to minimize physical contact.
- Children must stay at least six feet away from you, except for very short periods of time, such as eating meals and essential care-giving.
- Use separate bathroom facilities. If this is not possible, you can use disposable toilet seat covers, or wipe the toilet seat with disposable wipes after use. Flush the toilet two to three times after every use.
- Use separate toiletries such as combs and toothbrushes.
- Wipe items such as the telephone handset and mouthpiece, and television remote control with disposable wipes.
- Wash your clothing and bedsheets separately from the rest of the family.
- Avoid going barefooted indoors, and change socks often.
- Use separate eating utensils. Plastic flatware and paper plates and cups work well, since they can be thrown away.
- Do not touch other people's food, or food in public places such as produce at the grocery store, or public food dispensers.
- Avoid unnecessary car trips, public meetings, gatherings, or confined spaces with other people. This includes long trips to shopping areas, sporting events, theaters, etc.

If you have any questions regarding your radioactive iodine treatment, you may contact the Nuclear Medicine Team at (828) 213-1381. Should you need to seek medical attention at another facility within 10 days after your treatment, please inform your doctor at the other facility that you have had Iodine-131, and show staff there a copy of these instructions..