

## GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR REDUCING RADIATION EXPOSURE TO OTHER PEOPLE

You can keep radiation exposure as low as possible by following three general guidelines:

1. Distance. The farther away you are from others, the less radiation they will receive.
2. Time. The longer people are near you, the more radiation they receive.
3. Hygiene. Washing your hands often and showering reduces the amount of radiation you leave on surfaces around you.

Some drugs like radioactive iodine require you to take more precautions than others.

Here are some **"Best Practices"** you may need to follow. Some of these precautions may be difficult. They mean you may be separated from loved ones at a time when you most need their emotional and physical support. But remember that they are important to protect the people around you, especially young children, and remember they are temporary.

Your doctor and health care team will tell you if and for how long you need to follow these precautions:

1. Wash your clothing separately from the rest of your household.
2. Use one set of dishes and silverware and don't share them with others.
3. Use a bathroom reserved for you, if possible.
4. Use flushable wipes and disposable gloves when cleaning. Your doctor may tell you how to clean up vomit, urine, saliva or nasal discharge.
5. Dispose of your trash separately from the rest of the household. You may need to keep it in a safe place (away from people and pets) for a period of time to allow the radioactivity to naturally go down.
6. Sleep alone.
7. Avoid all kinds of intimate contact, including hugging and kissing.
8. Do not cook or prepare food for others.

Radioactive drugs can be used safely and effectively. Make sure you understand the instructions you received from your doctor and health care team. The best way to protect your family and the general public is to follow these instructions carefully and consistently.

## NRC MISSION

*The NRC licenses and regulates the Nation's civilian use of radioactive materials to provide reasonable assurance of adequate protection of public health and safety and to promote the common defense and security and to protect the environment.*

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT TREATMENT WITH RADIOACTIVE DRUGS



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Radioactive drugs are often used to diagnose and treat certain illnesses. They work by using radioactivity to damage cancer cells or other unwanted tissue. Every year in the United States, radioactive drugs are used more than 16 million times. You and your doctor have decided that treatment with a radioactive drug is the best therapy for you.

## TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR AND THE HEALTH CARE TEAM

Your health care team is the best source of information for your questions about your treatment. Talk about your treatment ahead of time so you can prepare and plan for any special arrangements that you may need to make to reduce radiation exposure to others. Your doctor can tell you about possible complications, side effects, and any changes in your diet or medication that you may need to make. You should talk about what to do to prepare yourself before treatment and what to expect after your treatment. Experience has shown that radiation exposure from patients can be safely controlled by providing appropriate instructions, and adherence to those instructions by the patients. Be sure to discuss instructions for avoiding exposure to others with your doctor.



## HOW LONG DOES A RADIOACTIVE DRUG STAY IN YOUR BODY?

It depends on the kind of radioactive drug and treatment you need. It may stay in your body for as little as a few days, or as long as a few weeks.

## HOW CAN YOU PROTECT OTHERS FROM BEING EXPOSED TO RADIATION?

With some drugs, you may need to be away from others for a period of time. Other people can be exposed to radiation from your saliva (kissing, sharing food), perspiration and body oils (touching) and urine and waste (bathroom sharing). Your health care team will give you specific instructions to follow after your treatment to keep exposure to others as low as possible. Your doctor will consider your own personal situation and your instructions may be tailored for you. Make sure you understand and can follow these instructions.

Here are some things your doctor and the health care team may consider:

- Where will you stay after your treatment (nursing home, apartment, house, dorm)?
- Do you have a separate bedroom and bathroom you can use for a few days?
- Will you be able to care for yourself, or do you need assistance?
- Who will care for small children that may need assistance after your treatment?
- How will you travel home after your treatment? Will you need to take a plane, bus, or train? If you are taking public transportation or staying in a hotel, discuss approaches for reducing exposure to others specific to your situation.



- When can you return to work?
- What effect will the treatment have on your pets?

Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, or think you may be pregnant. Radioactive drugs can harm an unborn child. If you are planning to become pregnant, ask your doctor how long you should wait after your treatment.

If you are breastfeeding, you may need to pump and discard your breastmilk while you are receiving treatment. With some drugs like radioactive iodine, you will need to completely stop breastfeeding for a period of time before you begin treatment to protect yourself and your baby. Discuss the best options for you with your doctor.

Additional information for patients treated with radioactive iodine can be found at: <https://www.nrc.gov/materials/miau/patient-release.html>.