

WHAT IS THYROID THERAPY/ THYROID ABLATION?

Thyroid therapy is a process in which a patient ingests a radioactive iodine capsule to treat an overactive thyroid gland. The thyroid is a gland in the neck that produces two hormones that regulate all aspects of the body's metabolism, the chemical process of converting food into energy. When a thyroid gland is overactive, it produces too much of these hormones, accelerating the metabolism. An overactive thyroid gland can cause multiple medical problems.

When a small dose of radioactive iodine is swallowed, it is absorbed into the bloodstream in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract and concentrated from the blood by the thyroid gland, where it begins destroying the gland's cells. Physicians hope to normalize the gland through this process. It is highly likely that some or most of the thyroid gland will be destroyed with this procedure. Since hormones produced by the thyroid are essential for metabolism, most patients will need to take thyroid pills for the rest of their life following the procedure.

WHAT TO EXPECT

If you are a female patient between the ages of 9 and 55 you are required to either consent to a pregnancy test or sign a Pregnancy Test Waiver form prior to your exam. The only exception will be for females with a history of total hysterectomy. If you are breastfeeding please inform the technologist before your exam.

A technologist will explain the procedure to you before you are given the radioiodine capsule to swallow. You will have to give written consent to participate. The technologist will also provide in writing a list of recommendations for receiving radioiodine treatments. These recommendations are as follows:

During the first 2 days following treatment:

1. Sleep alone (DO NOT SHARE A BED).
2. Limit close physical contact with others to a few minutes at a time.
3. Minimize contact with pregnant women and small children.
4. Flush the toilet twice after use. If possible, use separate bathroom.
5. Use separate dishes and utensils. Wash these separately. You may find it more convenient to use disposable (paper or plastic) dishes during this short period.
6. Use separate towels and washcloths. Wash these as a separate laundry load, if possible.
7. Wash hands frequently.

During the rest of the first week (days 3-7):

Limit close physical contact with pregnant females and small children to a few minutes at a time.

In addition:

1. Females of childbearing age should use birth control for 6-12 months following treatments.
2. Mothers should not breastfeed following treatments.

If you happen to vomit or "throw up" within the first 24 hours of receiving this pill please call the Nuclear Medicine Department. If you can see any portions of the pill please save it- do not discard it. Call the Johnston Health Radiology Department at (919) 938-7190 and ask to speak with a Nuclear Medicine Technologist.

