

BMDA Radioactive Iodine Ablation (or I-131 Treatment) for Thyroid Cancer

Now that you have completed your surgery and decided to undergo radioactive iodine ablation, there are many important steps and precautions you will need to take before, during and after your treatment.

Preparing for Treatment

- For two weeks prior to your dosing, you will need to follow a low iodine diet. Because the thyroid gland uses iodine to make the thyroid hormone, the pill you will be swallowing is a radioactive isotope of the iodine molecule. It will be absorbed by any remaining thyroid tissue and kill both the cancer cells and the normal cells. By following a low iodine diet in the weeks prior to treatment, this increases the thyroid cells' desire for iodine and increases the effectiveness of the treatment.
- Once a date is chosen for your treatment, if you are receiving Thyrogen injections, the endocrinology office should contact you to coordinate injections. Each of the two days prior to your dosing, you will receive an injection at the endocrinology office to further increase the remaining cells' desire for iodine.
- Female patients that are under the age of 55, that have no history of hysterectomy, will be required to get a pregnancy test prior to dosing.

Preparing Your Room

- Prior to dosing, prepare an area (bedroom and bathroom) in which to carry out your isolation after treatment. You may not share this area with others to avoid the possibility of unwanted exposure. As this time can sometimes lead to boredom or loneliness, fill the area with disposable newspapers, magazines, puzzles, and things to pass the time. Electronic equipment such as phones, laptops, or remote controls can be used carefully, but remember that everything you touch while in isolation has the possibility to spread contamination. These items will need to be wiped down after the 48-hour period is over. As an alternative, you may wish to wrap your electronic device in clear, plastic wrap for the 48 hours, and cut it off at the end of the isolation period.
- Equip your room with a cooler with items to eat and drink. Use disposable plates, utensils, cups, etc. that are easily discarded after use.
- Because the treatment can sometimes cause swelling and discomfort to your salivary glands, have some hard candy available to stimulate saliva and ease discomfort. Sometimes over-the-counter anti-inflammatory pain relievers (NSAIDs) such as Advil or Motrin (not Tylenol) can help reduce the pain and swelling.
- Purchase a new toothbrush, as you will need to discard the old one after the 48 hour period is over.

- Keep garbage bags in the room to throw away contaminated trash, place soiled clothing and linens to keep them until they are able to be laundered.

Day of Dosing and Isolation

- If possible, drive alone to the facility for your dosing. After you take the dose, you don't want to expose anyone unnecessarily. You should travel straight home and secure yourself in your area. You may not stop to void on the way home. If you must have someone drive you, then you are to sit as far away from that person in the car as possible.
- You are encouraged to drink a lot of fluid during this time to help flush your kidneys. You are also encouraged to shower often, as to clear your body of any residue that may be on your hair, skin, etc. due to perspiration.
- Each time you use the toilet, please flush twice.

After Isolation (After 48 hours)

- You will need to clean the area very well. Wipe down anything that was touched. Don't forget things like remote controls, light switches, doorknobs, and faucets. Place the cleaning items in the trash as well.
- You may be out among the general public, but should remain at least 6 feet away from others.
- Place the contaminated trash in a secure area for one week prior to taking it out for trash removal.
- Place the dirty linens and clothing in a secure area for a week prior to washing it. Please wash it by itself first, before ever washing it with any other laundry.

Follow up

- One week after your dosing, you will return to the hospital for a nuclear medicine scan. After the scan, you will return to the Radiation Oncology department for a reading. If the reading is in an acceptable range, you will be released from precautions at that time.
- Typically, results of the scan are available in 1-2 days. Once obtained, we will call you to either have you make an appointment to follow up with us, or release you to follow up with the endocrine office.

Questions

If there are questions at any time during the process, please call our office and we will be happy to assist you. Contact your Radiation Oncologist, Therapist or Nurse by calling 1-844-632-2278.