



RADIOACTIVE IODINE

What is RADIOACTIVE IODINE?

Radioactive iodine is a substance used to diagnose and treat disease, and is also a by-product of nuclear power generation. A serious accident at a nuclear power generating facility, or an act of terror like exploding a radioactive bomb, could cause radiation to be released into the environment. After such a serious accident or terrorist incident, radioactive fallout could extend beyond the point of impact, potentially increasing people's risk of exposure to radioactive iodine.

Signs and Symptoms:

Radiation can affect the body in a number of ways, and the adverse health effects of exposure may not be apparent for many years. Signs and symptoms depend on the amount of radiation absorbed by the body, the type of radiation, the route and length of time exposed, and the radiation dose absorbed by the person's body. Long term health effects of exposure to radioactive iodine could include a higher risk of contracting thyroid cancer, or other serious diseases.

Routes of Exposure:

Exposure to radiation can take place through inhaling radioactive iodine contained in dusts suspended in the air, or from such dusts deposited on the skin or clothing. Exposure can also occur by contact with materials released at the point of impact (explosion or accident).

What can you do?

Emergency response leaders may direct people to evacuate or "shelter in place." Staying inside a building may protect you from exposure to radiation. The safest place inside a building during a radiation emergency is a centrally located room or basement without windows. If you were located in an impacted area outside at the time of the accident or incident, go to a safe location, carefully remove your clothing, place it in a sealed plastic bag, and take a shower. Listen to radio or television for emergency messages.

Treatment:

Hospital care for persons exhibiting signs and symptoms after a serious accident. Administration of the FDA-recommended dose of potassium iodide (KI) is to be initiated upon issuance of an emergency order to do so, by a Public Health Official. Persons with known iodine sensitivity should not take KI; neither should persons with medical conditions associated with an increased risk of iodine hypersensitivity. Such individuals should be referred to their personal care physicians.

Diagnosis:

Based on known or suspected exposure to radioactive iodine.

Whom do you call?

Delaware Division of Public Health: 1-888-295-5156

For more information:

For more information on forms of acute radiation syndrome, go to: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/radiation/>