

GUIDELINES FOR CAT OWNERS AFTER RADIOIODINE THERAPY

Your cat has been treated with radioactive iodine for hyperthyroidism and is now safe to be discharged. For the next 7 days however, your cat will be emitting and excreting a very small amount of radiation in the urine and faeces and some precautions need to be taken to ensure that any radiation exposure if kept to a safe minimum level. These precautions are a cautious and conservative approach, and if you follow our simple guidelines the radiation you are exposed to is about the same amount you would receive on a return flight from Sydney.

1. Your cat should be housed indoors for the next 7 days and sleep in an area unoccupied by anyone else.
2. Do not allow children under 10 years old or pregnant women to have contact with your cat, food dishes, toys, and litter for the full 7 days.
3. Over the next 7 days, do not spend more than 20 minutes at a time in proximity to your cat. It is safe to handle your cat but avoid prolonged exposure.
4. Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling your cat or anything the cat has been in contact with (food dishes, toys, bedding, and the litter box). When cats groom themselves saliva contaminates their hair coat, which can then contaminate dishes and other objects.
5. Prevent your cat from having access to kitchen surfaces or anywhere where food is stored or prepared. If this does happen, clean the surface carefully before using it again.
6. There are no contact restrictions for this cat with other animals as the small amount of radiation has no impact in their relatively shorter lives with little exposure to other sources of radiation. They may safely share feeding bowls, cat beds and litter boxes.

7. If possible, use flushable litter for the next 2 weeks. Otherwise use scoopable litter and collect all waste in a sturdy container lined with two plastic bags (one placed inside the other). Store waste in a well-ventilated space away from your primary living areas, and hold for an additional 2 weeks so natural decay will reduce radioactivity to background levels. Then the litter may be disposed with the normal trash. Landfills do not allow the disposal of low-level radioactive waste and are equipped with sensitive radiation detectors.
8. Items that your cat routinely contacts (bedding, toys, litter trays) should be thoroughly washed with soap and water. Use disposable plastic gloves when cleaning and hold these with the stored waste for later disposal.
9. If your cat vomits, urinates, or defecates in the house, this should be cleaned up with paper towels and then placed in a rubbish bag for later disposal. Urine-soaked garments should be washed separately in a washing machine.
10. If your cat needs emergency care within the first week of coming home, then advise the veterinary staff that your cat has recently undergone radioiodine therapy.

VETERINARY FOLLOWUP

1 WEEK POST TREATMENT

Your cat should have a basic health exam, at your normal vet 1 week after discharge.

7-8 WEEKS POST TREATMENT

We advise that thyroid-hormone level, kidney function and weight be checked 7-8 weeks following treatment. After that, we leave it to your vet to determine any further monitoring, although they can contact us at any time for advice.