

Radioactive Iodine Therapy

Information for cat owners

How should I prepare my cat for treatment?

You and your veterinarian will work together to ensure all required information is available prior to treatment. After your phone consultation with our Veterinarian who is the Radiation safety Officer, there will be a clear plan for required diagnostics or treatments needed prior to the Radioactive Iodine Treatment.

- A reference total T4 is required prior to treatment and will have to be done with your cat off medications and/or supplements (methimazole, tapazole, Hill's Y/D).
- Your cat will have to be off thyroid medication prior to treatment (this is typically 10 days prior to the reference total T4 but is dependent on individual cat needs). When authorized to do so we will request that you suspend giving the thyroid medication
- We feed a combination of wet and dry food during their stay with us. If your cat is unfamiliar with either you could begin offering some at home to encourage a healthy and happy appetite while in the hospital with us
- During their stay we use flushable cat litter (Swheat Scoop), some cats can become frustrated with litter changes, so introducing them to a new litter at home might make that transition easier.
- You can bring toys and a small fabric item to make them feel at more at home; however, items will not be returnable after treatment due to radiation legislation

How long will my cat have to remain in the hospital?

By law, your cat must remain in the hospital until they are at a safe and legal radiation level. The average length of stay in our facility is 3-7 days but can vary for each cat and may be extended past that time frame. The Radioactive Iodine facility room is found in a quiet corner of our hospital, and we will do our best to keep your cat happy during their stay.

Feline enrichment

- We have a radio to play music to keep the cats entertained, and we do our best to make them feel safe and loved
- Your cat will be tended to twice daily only by trained staff members.
- Remember that the time away will be easier for your cat than for you, and the long-term benefits should outweigh any concerns you have.
- We will call you (email or text also available if requested) daily with updates, but no visiting is permitted during the hospitalization period.

What kind of post-treatment care will I have to provide?

After returning home, your cat will have a small amount of radiation remaining in the thyroid gland. We will provide detailed instructions on home care for the first 14 days after discharge to ensure safety for yourself and other family members

- Your cat will not be dangerous to other pets in the household, and you will be instructed on special handling for litter in your consultation
- You will have to limit close contact, and avoid sleeping with your cat, to an absolute minimum for 7 days following the treatment
- Pregnant, breastfeeding women and children under the age of 12 should not have contact with your pet during this time

These precautions are for your safety

After treatment, you need to schedule follow-ups with your regular veterinarian 6 weeks after discharge to monitor T4 and kidney levels.

What are some common factors to consider?

Hypothyroidism:

- Less than 3% of treated cats will become hypothyroid after treatment with radioiodine. This tends to occur in cats on antithyroid medications at the time of treatment, or if the thyroid tumor involves so much of the thyroid gland that not enough normal tissue remains to produce sufficient levels of T4.
- Clinical signs of hypothyroidism include weight gain, lethargy, and poor hair coat.

Hypothyroidism, unlike hyperthyroidism, is not a lifethreatening disease.

Hyperthyroidism:

- Hyperthyroidism can, in a small percentage of cases, recur in cats. If T4 levels do not return to normal within 90 days of treatment, we will retreat your cat at no charge
- If the recurrence of hyperthyroidism is not the result of treatment failure, but regrowth of tumour tissue on the thyroid gland, treatment can be done again. This usually happens when cats are diagnosed and treated for the first time at an early age and is a reflection of increased survival time in these cats – tumour regrowth is most common 3 or more years after initial treatment.

Kidney Disease:

- Hyperthyroidism can predispose a cat to other conditions and mask underlying health concerns like Kidney disease
- Treatment options should be carefully considered when Kidney disease is a concern as survival rate is heavily impacted
- Following thyroid treatment and when T4 levels have returned to persistently normal, it can potentially reveal underlying kidney issues