

Nuclear Medicine therapeutic imaging: information for carers or comforters accompanying patients

This leaflet is for family members / friends* of the patient who will accompany a patient during a Nuclear Medicine therapeutic procedure in order to provide physical or emotional support. The leaflet explains what the radiation risk is and will ask you to sign your understanding of this. Carers and comforters must be over 18 years of age.

**Staff asked to act as a carer and comforter must ask the operator to report the circumstances to the Medical Physics Expert (MPE) (0118 322 7355/7370).*

About the procedure

Therapeutic Nuclear Medicine imaging usually involves injecting the patient with a small amount of radioactive material or them taking a capsule by mouth. This radiation is designed to deliver treatment exposure to an organ or system.

There will be a low level of radiation present in the patient for a time after the injection (some days) and this may be excreted in urine, saliva and sweat. Exposure to radiation by being present (closer than arm's length) or exposure to bodily fluids while assisting a patient, e.g. a child or vulnerable adult, or exposure to bodily fluids for a time after the procedure makes you a 'carer and comforter' as defined by the radiation regulations. This includes occupations such as prison guards, hospital staff from other departments, social workers etc. Carers and comforters are **not** those persons who offer support to a patient as part of their role (e.g. Nuclear Medicine staff or radiographers).

The operator will give you details of how long certain restrictions will last following the procedure as this will vary depending on the individual treatment. In the case of Iodine-131 treatment, this could be several days.

What are the risks and who should not act as a carer or comforter?

- The risk to an unborn child is very small although a woman who is or may be pregnant must not act as a carer and comforter.
- You must act responsibly and follow the instructions of the Nuclear Medicine operator. The dose you will receive depends on how close you are to the patient and what procedure is being carried out, and what the patient does after the procedure, but is equivalent to a few days or weeks of natural background radiation. There is radiation all around us – coming from the earth and the atmosphere.
- **The risk from such a low dose of radiation is very small but if you are worried about acting as a carer and comforter, let the operator know that you do not wish to proceed.**

If you have any questions after reading this leaflet please ask the radiographer before you sign the declaration below.

Please sign the declaration below:

I have read and understood the information above and I will follow the instructions of the radiographer/technician. I understand that I will receive a very small dose of radiation by acting as the patient's carer and comforter.

Procedure :		
Activity, Isotope and radio-pharmaceutical:		
Patient hospital number:		
Carer / Comforter name (print)	Signature	Date

Contacting us

Medical Physics Department, Level 1 North Block, Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 5.00pm.
If you have any questions about your treatment, please ask the staff looking after you or telephone 0118 322 7355 or email: rbb-tr.physics@nhs.net

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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