Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Three-Week Hypothyroid Regimen

This information describes your 3-week hypothyroid regimen. This regimen includes diagnostic tests and your radioactive iodine treatment.



Day 1 of your 3-week hypothyroid regimen is:

_____

Before your hypothyroid regimen

Before your treatment, you will need to stop taking your thyroid medicine. Your healthcare provider will tell you when to stop.

Start following a low-iodine diet ____ days before Day 1 of your regimen.

- Follow the guidelines in the resource *Low-Iodine Diet* (www.mskcc.org/pe/low-iodine-diet).
- Drink at least 8 (8- ounce) glasses of decaffeinated liquids every day. These liquids should include water and other drinks listed in the low-iodine diet guidelines.

If you're a female of child-bearing age, you may have a blood pregnancy test before your treatment. This is to make sure you aren't pregnant. It's a hospital requirement for treatment.

During your hypothyroid regimen

During the first week of your regimen, you will come to the hospital Monday through Thursday. You will have blood work and imaging scans. These scans let us know where the thyroid cancer is.

During the second week of your regimen, you will get your treatment. This may be on any weekday. If you're admitted, you will be discharged from the hospital when your level of radioactivity is low enough. If you aren't admitted, your healthcare provider will give you a resource with other instructions.

During the third week of your regimen, you will have a post-treatment scan. This may be on any weekday. This is done to check where the radioactive iodine is in your body. A staff member in the Molecular Imaging and Therapy Service (MITS), also called Nuclear Medicine, will arrange for you.

Below is a typical regimen schedule:

Week 1: Diagnostic Testing	**Day 1** (4 to 6 hours) • Blood work • Diagnostic dose of radioactive iodine • Radiation measurement	**Day 2** (90 minutes) • Blood work • Scan • Radiation measurement	**Day 3** (90 minutes) • Blood work • Scan • Radiation measurement	**Day 4** (90 minutes) • Blood work • Scan • Radiation measurement
Week 2: Treatment	• Treatment dose of radioactive iodine			
Week 3 Follow-up	• Post-treatment scan			

Other tests that you may have include:

- A positron emission tomography (PET) scan. This is an imaging scan that measures your body's use of glucose (a type of sugar). Some tumors use more glucose than normal tissue. This test might give your healthcare provider more information

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Three-Week Hypothyroid Regimen - Last updated on May 15, 2026

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center