



ARECA I131

Feline Hyperthyroidism and Radioactive Iodine Treatment Frequently Asked Questions

Why would I choose radioactive iodine treatment over other options?

This is something to discuss with your family veterinarian. There are two major categories of treatments, management and definitive.

Management treatments include medications such as methimazole and special diets like Hills® Prescription Diet® y/d™. Both can be effective at maintaining normal thyroid hormone levels, are life-long, and may be appropriate for a variety of situations.

Definitive treatments include surgical removal of the thyroid, and radioactive iodine. Surgical removal of the thyroid has the major drawback of having to remove both normal and abnormal tissue. Essentially, radioactive iodine is taken up primarily by the abnormal cells, which are then damaged. This leaves many normal cells to take over the production of hormone at normal levels.

Studies have shown that cats treated with radioactive iodine tend to live longer than those treated with methimazole¹.

Why does my pet have to be hospitalized?

Cats are hospitalized during treatment for the safety of the people at home. The radiation is excreted at high levels for the first few days and is present in the urine, feces, and saliva. Trained staff equipped with safety gear care for the patient during this time.

In humans, this can be done on an outpatient basis because we are reasonably expected to eliminate the radioactive iodine in the bathroom and can care for ourselves.

What does limited physical contact mean?

During the two weeks immediately following treatment, we ask you to take a few precautions for the safety of all involved. You should limit close contact (i.e. patient laying on your lap) to about 30 minute per day. Furthermore, we ask you to keep the patient out

of food preparation areas, and to prevent them from sleeping with people in the household.

Why are we so worried about the kidneys?

Older cats are susceptible to many diseases besides hyperthyroidism. Routine wellness at your family veterinarian is always useful in detecting things such as heart disease, liver disease, early cancer, and kidney disease.

However, hyperthyroidism causes more blood to circulate to the kidneys, which can mask problems.

Generally, masked disease is usually mild, and can be managed after treatment, just as in any older cat. However, there is a small chance that more serious disease could be unmasked. A methimazole trial can be done to detect these serious issues.

In cats that have serious kidney disease, investing in radioactive iodine treatment might be reconsidered.

What if I have a medical condition that I am worried about?

(i.e. Immune problems, Pregnancy, Genetic sensitivities)

These questions are best handled between you and your doctor. If you have had radioactive iodine treatment yourself, or if you have immune problems that are of concern, please consult your doctor directly.

Pregnant women cannot be involved in many of the routine tasks, such as litterbox cleaning, for treated patients, so we recommend waiting to treat these cats.

What about my other pets?

There is no risk to other pets. Treated cats may interact normally with all other animals in the house.

¹ Milner RJ, Channell CD, Levy JK, Schaer. Survival times for cats with hyperthyroidism treated with iodine 131, methimazole, or both. JAVMA 2006 Feb 15;228(4):559-63.



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