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Frequently Asked Questions About Radioiodine Treatment for Hyperthyroid Cats

1. What is radioiodine treatment and how will it cure my cat's overactive thyroid?

The thyroid gland uses iodine (from food) to make thyroid hormone. Radioiodine is made by linking a radioactive molecule (I-131) to an iodine molecule. When the radioiodine is injected into your cat, it basically acts like a smart bomb going directly to the overactive thyroid gland and destroying the overactive tissue.

2. What are the risks of radioiodine therapy?

While using a radioactive substance to treat your cat may sound a bit scary, the injection is actually quite safe. There is a risk in some cats that therapy may cause destruction of too much thyroid tissue and result in hypothyroidism (too *little* thyroid hormone). This is uncommon but is why your cat will need to have blood tests done following therapy to make sure this has not happened.

There is also a very small risk (<1%) that your cat will require more than one dose of radioiodine. Again, this is why post-treatment monitoring is so important.

3. Why does my cat have to stay in the hospital after treatment?

After the radioiodine injection, state law mandates that your cat be housed in our radiation ward until the radiation drops to a predetermined level. This usually takes between 3 to 5 days. ALL of the radiation will not be gone by that time however so it is **VERY IMPORTANT** that you follow that safety guidelines that you are given when you take your cat home.

During their stay with us, your cat will be given fresh food, water, and litter on a daily basis. No medications will be given and personal items (e.g., toys, bedding, etc.) are not allowed. You will also not be



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permitted to visit during this time. We promise, we don't do this to torture you – it is for the safety of everyone involved in your cats care.

4. What if there are children, seniors, or pregnant women in my house when my cat is discharged from the hospital?

Because there will still be traces of radioactive material still present in your cats system when they go home, it is very important that you follow the instructions that you are given. In the event that there are children, seniors, people with compromised immune systems, or pregnant women in the house, you may want to discuss boarding your cat with your family veterinarian during the 2 week, post-treatment time period. Non-pregnant owners over 18 years of age may visit the cat during this additional 2-week period.

5. What is the cost of radioiodine therapy?

Radioiodine therapy at Sugar Land Veterinary Specialists is \$1750.00, which includes treatment, hospitalization for up to 5 days, and radiation monitoring. You and your cat will initially have a consultation with one of our Internal Medicine specialists who will review your records and examine your cat to make sure your cat is a good candidate for therapy. Once your cat is cleared for radioiodine, this initial consultation fee will be deducted from the cost of the radioiodine therapy.

The radioiodine fee does not include additional diagnostic tests, or treatment for any other condition that may arise while your cat is hospitalized.

Although radioiodine is the treatment of choice for the majority of cats with hyperthyroidism, we believe that is not the best choice for every patient, or for every owner. **If we can provide additional information that will make this decision easier, please do not hesitate to contact us.**