

Preparation for radioactive iodine therapy

This diet is suitable for people who are going to be treated with radioactive iodine. This leaflet explains the reasons for limiting foods that are high in iodine, and suggests low-iodine alternatives.

Why you should follow a low iodine diet

A diet that is rich in iodine could interfere with your radioactive iodine treatment. A low iodine diet will reduce your iodine intake **before** your treatment, and help to maximise your body's uptake of the radioactive iodine when you receive your treatment. It is not possible or necessary to follow a no iodine diet.

Where is iodine found?

Iodine is found in many foods in varying amounts. It is essential for good health. The richest sources are foods from the sea as well as dairy produce and eggs. In some countries iodine is added to salt. This does not happen in the UK, so it is fine to use ordinary table salt, but best to avoid imported food items

How long should the low iodine diet be followed for?

The diet is for a short time only. Evidence suggests that a duration of 1-2 weeks is good enough.

Please start your diet on

After you have received the radioactive iodine treatment, you can return to your normal diet.

What if you eat something high in iodine by mistake?

Eating a high iodine food accidentally is unlikely to affect your treatment, just carry on with the low iodine dietary advice provided here.

Should you look on the internet for more information?

No. Most internet information suggests avoiding all foods that contain salt. This is not necessary in the UK. This is a very specialised diet, for a short time only.

If you have any questions or queries please contact

If you are taking nutritional supplements please contact your dietitian.

Low iodine foods you can eat freely

- Fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables, including potatoes
- **Cooked** green vegetables like spinach and broccoli
- Fresh and frozen meat
- Ordinary table salt and sea salt
- Rice and dried pasta
- Fresh bread (including fresh sliced bread)
- **Non-dairy** spread such as Vitalite or Pure or Flora non-dairy
- Olive oil, vegetable oils and nut oils
- Water, soft/fizzy drinks, fruit juices and alcoholic drinks
- Tea and coffee **without milk**
- Milk substitutes, such as rice, coconut, almond or soya milk (check labels for ingredients, and avoid brands that contain carrageenan which is a seaweed derivative)
- Dark/plain chocolate with a **minimum of 70% cocoa**
- Crisps

Foods which should be limited

- Milk - limit to a maximum of 25ml (about 5-7 teaspoons) each day which could be used in tea and coffee
- Butter - limit to a very thin scraping (1 teaspoon or 5g) each day
- Cheese – 25g (1oz), once each week
- Dairy produce like yoghurt, or dairy ice cream (limit to 1 portion each week)
- Egg – only 1 each week
- Egg-containing products like mayonnaise, custard, fresh egg pasta, egg fried rice, pancakes, Yorkshire puddings

High iodine foods which should be avoided

- Fish, seafood, seaweed, kelp, laverbread
- Raw green vegetables like spinach or broccoli
- Cakes and biscuits containing butter and eggs
- Milk chocolate and white chocolate
- Take away meals and fast foods/restaurant foods (as ingredients are unknown)
- Iodised salt and pink Himalayan salt if imported/bought outside the UK
- Vitamins and mineral supplements, nutritional supplements and cough mixtures (unless prescribed by your medical team, for example vitamin D)

Meal suggestions

Breakfast

- Toast with non-dairy spread with marmalade, jam, honey, or marmite
- Porridge made with water or milk substitute (specific brands cannot be suggested as ingredients might be changed by the manufacturer), topped with fruit, honey or syrup
- Cereals with water or milk substitute
- Fresh fruit, or fruit salad, or grapefruit cocktail
- Cooked breakfast (without eggs), such as bacon, sausages, tomatoes, mushrooms, hash browns, baked beans, toast

Lunch

- Sandwich made with non-dairy spread with ham, chicken, bacon or Quorn™ and salad
- Salad (such as cucumber, lettuce, tomato, avocado, sweetcorn, peas) with olive oil and vinegar (**no** raw spinach or raw broccoli) topped with chicken breast
- Jacket potato (without butter) with baked beans or chilli con carne
- Beans or tinned tomatoes on toast
- Soup (without cream, butter or milk) with bread
- Couscous with meat, chicken or chickpeas, and vegetables such as roasted peppers, courgettes, tomatoes

Dinner

- Spaghetti bolognese
- Pork or lamb chops with potatoes and vegetables
- Steak served with roasted mushrooms, grilled tomatoes, chips or jacket potato
- Roasted meat, vegetables and roasted potatoes with gravy
- Chicken, meat, Quorn™ or tofu stir fry with vegetables and rice
- Stewed meat (chicken, beef, lamb or pork) with potatoes, carrots and swede
- Chilli con carne with rice and peas
- Jacket potato (without butter) with baked beans, ham or chicken and salad
- Sweet and sour chicken with rice
- Risotto (without cheese) with chicken, butternut squash, peas and sweetcorn
- Curry dishes without cream

Snacks and puddings

- Tinned or fresh fruit, stewed or poached fruit
- Jelly, sorbet, meringue
- Soya dessert or soya yoghurt
- Dairy free custard, or single cream alternative
- Vegetable crudities and homemade avocado dip (guacamole) or soya plain yoghurt and mint sauce
- Nuts (maximum 30g (1oz) each day)
- Sweet or salted popcorn
- Potato crisps or rice cakes
- Dark chocolate

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the thyroid nurse specialist, **t:** 020 7188 84098.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

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Leaflet number: 4670/VER2

Date published: December 2020

Review date: December 2023

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A list of sources is available on request