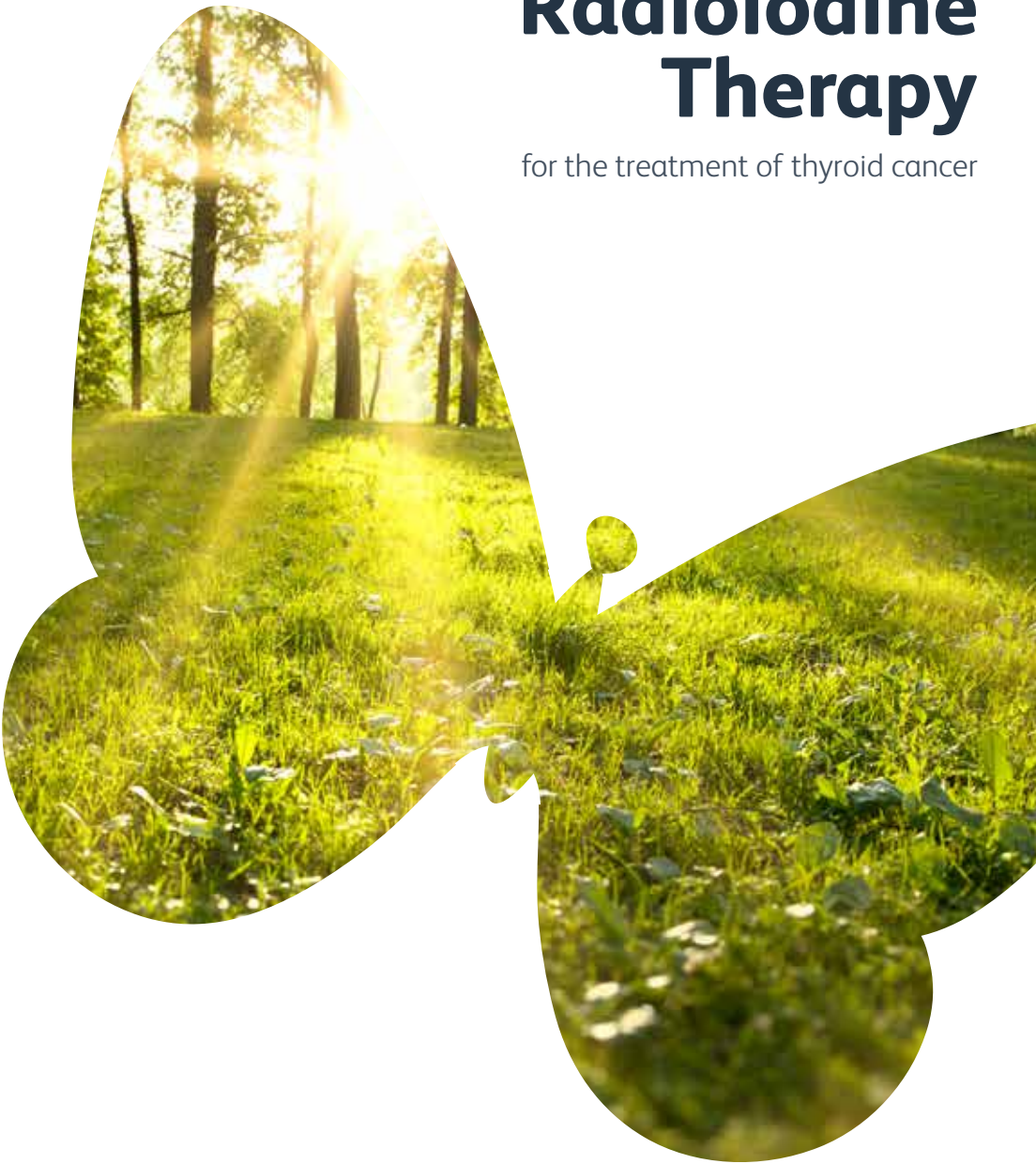


# Radioiodine Therapy

for the treatment of thyroid cancer



# Contents

**PAGE 5:** Radiotherapy explained

---

**PAGE 6:** Before your treatment

---

**PAGE 8:** What to bring to hospital

---

**PAGE 10:** Hospital room facilities

---

**PAGE 12:** Your Treatment time table

---

**PAGE 17:** During your hospital stay

---

**PAGE 21:** Going Home

---

**PAGE 25:** Discharge instructions

---

**PAGE 30:** Thyroid Cancer surveillance follow up

---

**PAGE 33:** Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns?

---

**PAGE 34:** Notes

---

**PAGE 35:** Map

---





# 1

## Radioiodine Therapy Explained

For most patients treatment starts with surgery to remove part or all of the thyroid gland. However even after surgery there might be some thyroid cells still left in your body, to fully destroy these cells you need radioactive iodine treatment.

### Radioiodine Therapy Explained

- The radioactive iodine treatment will be given to you in the form of a small capsule, about the same size as a normal headache tablet. You need to swallow the tablet with a drink of water.
- Some of the radioactive iodine will be absorbed by any remaining thyroid cells which are left in your body. The rest will leave your body when you sweat or go to the toilet.
- While the radioactive iodine is present in your body, you will have to stay in hospital, in your own private room usually for about 3-5 days. This is to protect your family and close contacts from being exposed to radiation from you.
- Before you return home, you will be given instructions about certain things you can and can't do for a few weeks after you go home.

# 2

## Before Your Treatment

### Pregnancy

- It is very important that you do not become pregnant before your treatment. If you are pregnant you cannot have this treatment.
- Pregnancy tests cannot tell if you are pregnant for the first 2 weeks it is very important that you do not become pregnant before having this treatment
- Pregnancy or fathering a child should also be avoided for 6 months after the treatment.

### Medication

Your doctor will tell you if you are to stop taking any of your medications or not.

### Dietary advice

Do not eat the following foods for the two weeks before coming into hospital:

- Cough medicine
- Iodised tablet salt
- Sea salt
- Vitamin supplements
- Mineral supplements
- Canned and glacé cherries
- SalamiPastries and sweets artificially coloured red

Try and have less of the following foods before coming into the hospital for your treatment.

- Fish and seafood
- Eggs
- Dairy products including cheese, milk and milk products

Try to make sure you have a diet which is high in fibre, as it is important to avoid constipation and upset stomach.



# 3

## What to bring with you to hospital

### What to bring with you to hospital

- Old clothes/pyjamas/slippers <sup>1</sup>
- Small amounts of toiletries <sup>2</sup>
- Cartons of juice, fruit squash or drink of your choice
- Sharp tasting boiled sweets e.g. Acid/Lemon Drops. Paper tissues instead of material hankies
- Books, puzzles, magazines, anything to help to pass the time
- Going home clothes <sup>3</sup>
- Sharp tasting boiled

If you would like to visit the room/iodine suite prior to your treatment contact Victor Synge Ward and a visit can be organised. Phone - 01 4162236

The hospital room where you will stay is a big room with a large window which supplies plenty of natural light. It is a single room located at the end of Victor Synge Ward on the second floor of the hospital.

<sup>1</sup> A small amount of radioactive iodine will be left on the clothes you wear during your stay in hospital, and so they must be left behind when you leave or collected at a later date.

<sup>2</sup> Toothbrushes must be disposed of at the end of your stay. Other toiletries such as razors, soaps and cosmetics may also have small amounts of radioactive iodine and may need to be left behind.

<sup>3</sup> You can bring clothes for going home with you, and they will be stored safely in the room. If you prefer they can be brought to you by a family member or friend on the day you go home.

# 4

## Hospital Room Facilities

### The facilities in the room include:

- Bathroom with shower
- Small fridge
- Television
- CD player/radio
- Computer with internet access and webcam

There is a special food disposal unit in the room to stop the build up of left over food in the bins within the room. You will be shown how to use the food disposal unit before your treatment.

Please put all left over soft food and all drinks through the food disposal. Please do not use it for the disposal of hard items such as bones, or bulky items such as banana skins, as this could damage to it.

Any waste food which cannot go in to the disposal unit should be put in the waste bin.



# 5

## Your Treatment Time Table

As part of your treatment you will need to visit the following parts of the hospital:

- The Diabetes Day Centre, situated upstairs in Hospital 5
- The Nuclear Medicine Department (situated in the X-Ray Department)
- Victor Synge Ward (situated in the main hospital) Ph.4162236
- There is a map atw the back of this booklet showing you where to go

### Contacts

Endocrinology Secretary  
**01 4162195/4162488**  
*(You may be asked to leave a message and your call will be returned as soon as possible)*

Email:  
**healysec@stjames.ie**

Nuclear Medicine Department:  
**01 416 2753**

### Monday

- 8 am: Have a blood sample taken in the blood test department (phlebotomy), in the main hospital building.
- 8.30 am: Go to the Diabetes Day Centre, Hospital 5 for a Thyrogen injection. You will receive two injections of Thyrogen 1 day apart, each as an injection into the buttock muscle.
- You will have to stay for 30mins after receiving the injection to make sure you have no side effects.
- If you are a woman between the ages of 18yrs to 55yrs, you will have a pregnancy test carried out before treatment. As pregnancy tests do not detect

pregnancy for up to two weeks from conception it is very important that you don't become pregnant in the 2 weeks before treatment.

- You can then go home.

### Tuesday

- 8.30 am: Attend Diabetes Day Centre, Hospital 5, for your second Thyrogen injection. You will not need to wait after this injection.
- After receiving your injection you should go to the main hospital. You can leave your belongings in the Victor Synge ward if you wish before your x-ray appointment.

### Wednesday

- 10.00am: Attend the x-ray department situated in the main hospital. To get to the Nuclear Medicine department follow the yellow line on the floor to the left of the main reception. You will meet a medical physicist for treatment preparation. This will include taking a small uptake capsule test.
- Following this go to the Victor Synge ward for admission. You will be able to come and go from the room until you receive your radioactive iodine therapy on Wednesday.
- Day of treatment- 8.00 am you will have a test in the Nuclear Medicine Department to check the uptake of the small amount of radioactive iodine you received on Tuesday.
- 8.30am Radioactive iodine treatment usually occurs early in the morning around -8.30am in your room. Your room/ is on Victor Synge Ward.
- Once treatment has been given to you. You will not be able to leave your room until you go home.
- Drinking lots of fluids helps flush the radioactive iodine from your body. Wait for 2 hours after getting the capsule and then drink plenty of fluids.

### Thursday

- The physics team will monitor the levels of radio-active iodine in your body, this will help to decide when you go home.
- You will be asked to sit in front of a monitor on the wall. This will take your reading. The physicist will take the readings outside the room

### Friday/Monday

Discharge home.

- The discharge day will depend on your radioactive iodine levels in your body.
- A body scan will be done in the Nuclear Medicine department on Friday or Monday, the exact date will be decided by your doctor
- Most patients go home on Friday. A very small number of patients have to stay longer.





## 6

### During your hospital stay

- The radioiodine tablet will be administered to you in the room by the Consultant Endocrinologist and a Physicist. This takes only a few minutes.
- Once you have been given the treatment you will be radioactive and you will have to stay in your room until you go home
- You are not locked into the room and you can leave in case of emergency.
- After 2 hours have passed you should drink plenty of fluids. This helps to wash the remaining radioiodine from your body.
- You don't need to stay in bed or dress in nightclothes while you are in your room, unless you want to rest.

### Visitors

- You are not allowed visitors for the first day after treatment because you will be radioactive.
- After the first day you may have visitors in the room for half an hour per person per day. The visitors must be over the age of 14 and must not be pregnant. Visitors must stay at least three meters (about 9 feet) away from you at all times.
- There will be a chair in the room, just inside the door, for your visitors to use. Your visitor should sit on the chair and you sit at the head of the bed. They should not sit on the bed, touch your things or take anything away

### Nursing and Medical Staff

- Staff will not come into your room, they will contact you to ensure you have everything you need.
- If you need medical attention at any time this will be provided immediately. – Phone 2236/2242
- Your meals, drinks and medicines will be brought to your room by the staff on the ward and passed into you via a hatch.
- There is a telephone in the room, should you require anything. Family and friends can also call you on this number; 01 410 3859.

### Side Effects

- You may be tired especially if your doctor has changed your medications.

If you have a sore throat or a slight swelling under the jaw., this is most likely due to the radioiodine treatment. You may also have some swelling of the glands in your mouth which make saliva. This is a short term effect and can be made better by sucking on sharp tasting sweets such as lemon drops.



# 7

## Going Home

### Going Home

- The amount of iodine remaining in your body will be measured daily by a hospital physicist. You will be requested to sit in front of a small meter, mounted on the wall.
- As soon as iodine remaining in your body reaches a safe level (usually after 3-5 days), the physicist will inform the doctors looking after you, who will let you go home.
- You will need to visit the Nuclear Medicine Department where you had your scan before.

This will usually be arranged for the day you go home or the week after you go home.

- When you leave hospital the level of radioactivity remaining in your body will reduce slowly (the rate can vary from person to person).
- Discharge instructions detailing the precautions that you must take in the weeks following your discharge are at the back of this booklet. However, some important guidelines which may require you to plan in advance include:



## Travel

It is advised to avoid public transport immediately after radioiodine treatment, because you could be sitting close to mixed groups of people, who may include children or pregnant women. Please bear this in mind when planning how you will travel home from the hospital. Do not book a holiday that involves public transport or air travel during the weeks after leaving hospital. The physicist from the Nuclear Medicine Department can advise you on the earliest date for travel, as it may depend on where you are planning to travel.

## Work

We recommend that you do not return to work or school for a further week after you go home from hospital. Depending on your type of work, you may be asked to stay off from work for a longer period e.g. if you work with children. It is very important that you avoid close contact with young children and pregnant women.

## Social functions and entertainment

Avoid going to social functions (such as birthdays, weddings or christenings) or entertainment venues (such as cinema, theatre, football stadiums, concert venues, fairs or festivals) during the two weeks following your stay in hospital. These events would involve being in close proximity to other people for over an hour.

## At home

You should sleep in a separate bed when you go home. Other people in your house should not sleep within 2 metres/ 6 feet of your bed in any direction. This is because the walls of most houses do not provide good protection against this type of radiation.

## If you have a baby or pregnant partner at home

The physicist will discuss radiation protection issues with you very carefully to ensure that there is no risk to children or pregnant woman from the small amount radiation still in your body when you go home.

If possible, it is best if you can stay at in a different house to very young children or a pregnant partner for a few days – perhaps with a relative

or friend. If this is not possible, then the physicist will discuss with you how best to avoid risk of radiation exposure to the family.

If you look after a small baby (less than 2 years old) you should not be their main carer for the first week after leaving hospital. This is important. Perhaps a partner, friend or relative could look after the baby?

If you are breastfeeding you cannot do this after treatment. Make sure you discuss this with your doctor before treatment.

Do not become pregnant or father a child after having radioactive iodine for six months. You may want to talk to your doctor in advance about how to prevent a pregnancy.



8

## Discharge instructions for patients after radio-iodine therapy for Thyroid Cancer

You have been treated with radioactive iodine to treat a thyroid problem. Most of the iodine will leave your body when you go to the toilet or sweat. For some time, however, some of the iodine will stay inside your body. This means that you are still radioactive and should take care around other people who are physically close to you.

It is your responsibility to protect relatives, friends, colleagues and others.

The following questions and answers are designed to inform you about simple precautions to be taken after you go home from the hospital.

These instructions should be followed for 7-14 days. The physicist will specify the exact duration on the day you go home depending on how much radiation is still in your body.

### 1. What is the most important precaution?

Do not sit close to any person either at home or at work. Try to maintain a distance of at least 1 metre/3 feet. For long periods (more than 1 hour), stay 2 metres/6 feet away.

### 2. What about contacts with pregnant women?

Contact with pregnant women should be minimised. Try to stay at least 2 metres/6 feet away from pregnant women.

### 3. Is it safe to become pregnant/father a child?

Some of the iodine will remain in your body for a long time. It is recommended that you should not become pregnant or father children for a period of six months after treatment.

### 4. Can I still see my children and care for them?

If your children are under ten years old, please avoid close contact (such as hugging or holding) when you can. The risk is higher for young children than for adults, therefore, play it safe and avoid unnecessary contact for an additional week on top of the recommended period.

### 5. What about infants?

Children under two years old should be looked after by someone else. If possible arrange for them to stay with relatives or friends.

### 6. Can I go on with breast-feeding?

Radioactive iodine is passed on in breast milk for quite a long time. Therefore breast-feeding must be stopped immediately.

### 7. Can I be in close contact with my partner or other people at home?

Any close contact such as hugging or intimacy should be limited to half an hour a day. You should sleep in a separate bed. Beds should be 2 metres/6 feet apart, even if there is a wall separating them. This is because the walls of most houses do not provide good protection against this type of radiation.

### 8. What if my partner is pregnant?

If your partner is pregnant, it is important to avoid close contact with her.

### 9. Do the precautions apply to contact with those over 60?

For those over 60 years, the risk is much lower than

for other people. Special precautions are for that reason less important.

### 10. Can I receive visitors?

Short visits, less than two hours, are not a problem. Keep a distance of about 2 metres/6 feet and avoid close contact. You should not have visits from pregnant women and small children.

### 11. Can I go to work?

It is usually recommended that you stay away from work for a further week after you go home from the hospital. If your work requires that you are in close contact (less than 2 metres/6 feet away) from other people for long periods of time, please discuss this with your doctor. You should in any case inform your manager.



## **12. What if I am a pre-school teacher?**

Pre-school teachers or others, who are in close contact with young children during working hours, should stay off work. Your doctor will tell you for how long.

## **13. Can I go to the movies or other entertainment?**

It is not a good idea to visit cinemas and other social events where you are close to other people for more than one hour.

## **14. May I use public transport?**

For two weeks after you go home from the hospital, you should not use public transport for journeys lasting more than two hours. Longer trips should only be undertaken when they can't be avoided. In that case, try

to find a place where you can sit alone. Ask your doctor for advice if the trip is longer.

## **15. What about using a taxi?**

Sit in the back on the opposite side from the driver. Do not spend more than two hours with any one taxi driver.

## **16. Can I use the same toilet as other people?**

Yes, but be careful not to spill urine when you go to the toilet. Always use toilet paper and flush the toilet twice. It is also important to wash your hands straight away.

## **17. What about cutlery, crockery, bed linen, towels etc.?**

Radioactive iodine also leaves the body in the saliva and sweat of patients. Therefore, cutlery, crockery,

towels, bed linen etc. should not be shared with other people. After washing they are completely safe. There is no need to wash them separately.

## **18. What happens if I have to go to a hospital?**

If you have to go to a hospital unexpectedly, please tell the doctor that you have been treated with radioactive iodine recently even when you are attending St James' Hospital.

## **19. Can I travel abroad?**

If you are planning to travel abroad within a few months of treatment, please discuss this with the physicist before leaving the hospital. Some

airports have very sensitive radiation monitors at immigration points which can be set off even by very small amounts of iodine. If you are planning to travel abroad, you will be given a letter that you can give to the authorities, explaining that you have received iodine as part of your medical treatment.

~ If you are unsure about any of the advice. Please contact the X-ray Department in St. James's Hospital at **01 4162753**.

## Thyroid Cancer Follow Up And Surveillance

Once your Radioactive iodine treatment is over, your doctor will want to see you for regular check-ups. This is known as follow-up. At first these check-ups will be quite often but gradually happen less. The follow-up will continue for at least 5 years. At the follow-up, you may have tests like a physical exam, X-rays, scans and blood tests but everyone is different.

Your thyroid cancer surveillance will take place in the Diabetes Day Centre, where you went for your injections. Blood tests and scans (if necessary) will happen in the Main hospital. Most Out Patient appointments will be in Suite 1 in the main hospital Out Patient Department (OPD).

### Contacts

#### Endocrinology Secretary

01 4102195/4162488

**Email:** [healysec@stjames.ie](mailto:healysec@stjames.ie)

If you are worried about a new problem please let your doctor know as soon as you can

### Timetable For Follow Up

#### At 6 weeks:

After treatment a blood test is carried out to check that the dose of your thyroid hormone and calcium is right for you. These tests are called Thyroid function test (TFT's) and calcium.

These Blood tests can be taken in the blood test department in the hospital or by your GP. You will be given

the results either by your GP or the Hospital doctors depending on where you had the test.

#### At 3 months:

Out Patient Appointment in the OPD please remember to go to the blood test to have bloods taken 2 weeks prior to this appointment.

#### At 6 months:

Out Patient Appointment in the OPD. Please remember to go to the blood test Department to have bloods taken 2 weeks prior to this appointment.

#### At 9 months:

Out Patient Appointment in the OPD. Please remember to go to the blood test Department to have bloods

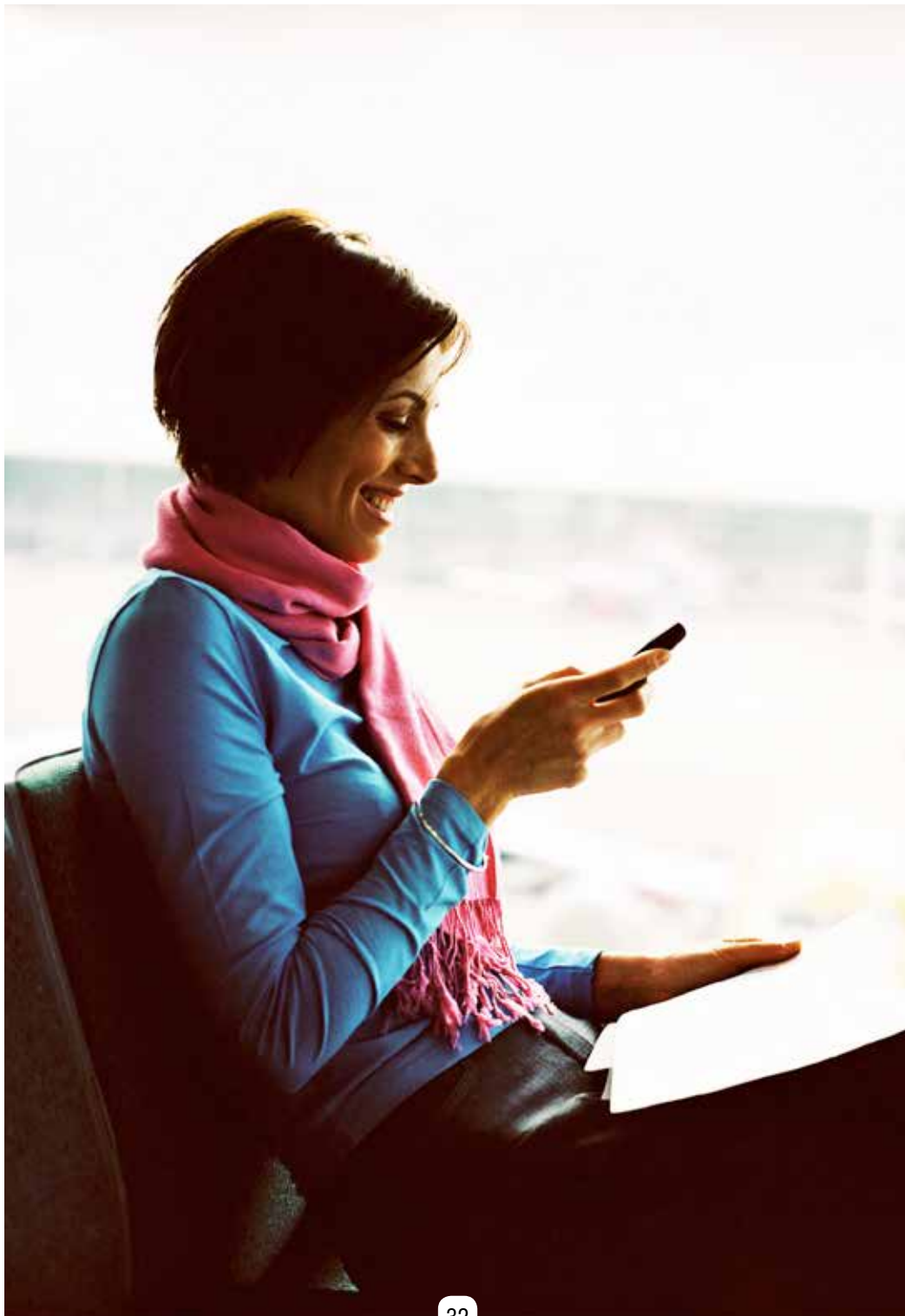
taken 2 weeks prior to this appointment.

#### At 12 months:

Thyroid Cancer surveillance this will include:

- Blood tests
- Ultrasound of your neck.
- Injection of Thyrogen (hormone)
- A full body scan may also be requested by your Doctor.
- This will be followed by an OPD appointment

More detailed information is available on the 'Thyroid Cancer Surveillance' leaflet. Follow up with the doctor will happen every year.



# 10

## Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns?

Please feel free to ask questions at any time. You should direct all medical questions to your doctor who ordered this treatment. All questions about the radiation guidelines can be answered by the physicist in the nuclear medicine department. Contact details are provided below:

### **Physicists:**

#### **9am - 5pm Monday - Friday:**

Nuclear Medicine Department,  
St. James's Hospital,  
James's Street,  
Dublin 8.  
Tel: 01 416 2753

#### **All other times:**

Hospital Switch Board  
Tel: 01 410 3000  
Ask to be connected to  
The Radiation Protection  
Advisor.

#### **Department of Endocrinology:**

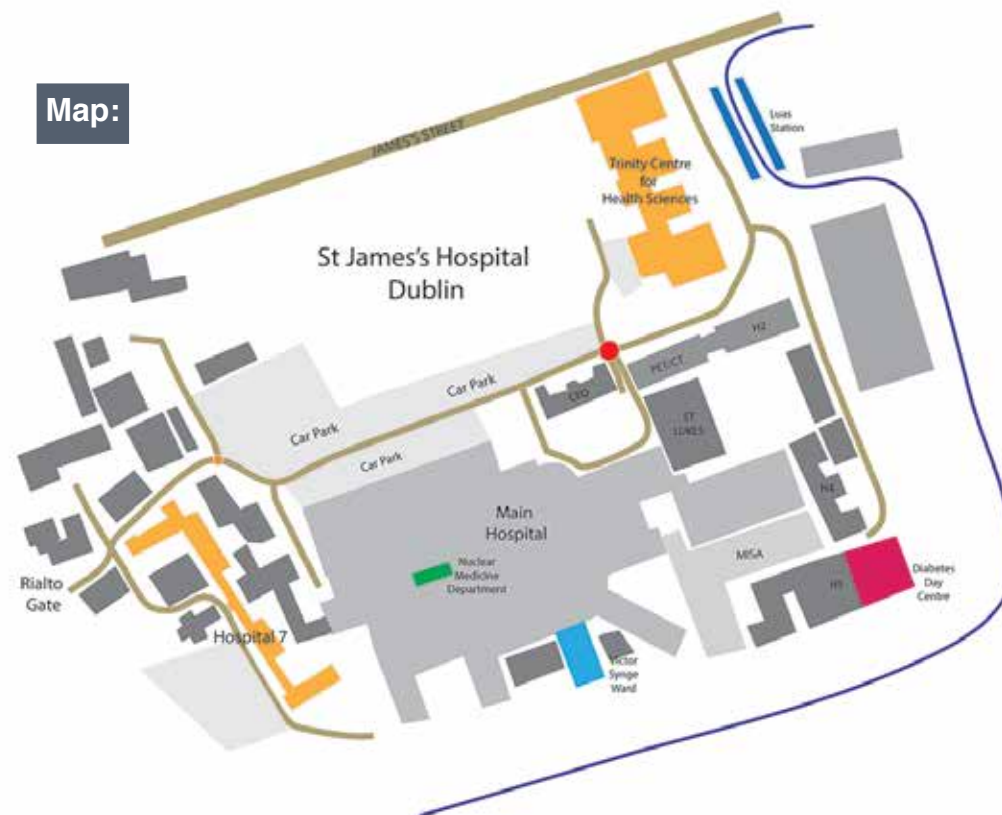
Hospital 5 Unit 4,  
St. James's Hospital,  
James's Street,  
Dublin 8.  
Tel: 01 416 2195  
Hospital Switch: 01 410 3000  
and ask for bleep 802.







## Notes and questions:

[illegible]

## Map:



-  The Diabetes Day Centre is located in Hospital 5. From the James's street entrance turn left at Junction 1 and follow the road around to Hospital 5.
-  The Nuclear Medicine Department is located in the X-Ray Department in the main hospital. Follow route 1 from the main concourse to the X-Ray Department.
-  Victor Synge ward is located on the second floor of the main hospital. Take the lift to level 2 and follow signs to ward.
-  Entrance to the underground public car park is located off Junction 2, between the CEO building and PET/CT.



OSPIDÉAL NAOMH SÉAMAS  
ST. JAMES'S HOSPITAL

