

# I-131 Patient discharge and home care instructions

New Haven Central Hospital for Veterinary Medicine

Your cat was treated with \_\_\_\_\_ mCi of radioactive iodine (I-131) at New Haven Central Hospital for Veterinary Medicine (NHCHVM) on \_\_\_\_\_ for the treatment of hyperthyroidism. He/she has been housed at NHCHVM in a safe and secure environment while the radioactivity level has been high. Now the levels are low enough that he/she can go home to continue his/her recovery in your care.

Because your cat still has a small amount of radioactive material in his/her body, they continue to emit a low level of radiation. The level is low enough that no member of the public should be exposed to unhealthy levels of radiation (less than 100 mrem/year and less than 2 mrem per hour as defined by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission) as long as you follow the guidelines below. This radioactivity will gradually decline and will be gone about 3 weeks after you take him/her home. During this time you must follow the safety procedures listed below to minimize any risk of exposure to you or your family or others.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call us here at NHCHVM.

## Household safety procedures

- Keep your cat in his/her carrier until you get home.
- Your cat must be kept strictly indoors for 3 weeks to minimize exposure to other people, pets and wildlife and so you can closely monitor his/her treatment response.
- Your cat must be isolated to one quiet room in your house for the first week. This should not be an occupied bedroom, a frequented bathroom or other high-traffic room. After the first week, your cat may be given access to the remainder of the home.
- Keep your cat off the counters to prevent the contamination of food-preparation surfaces for 3 weeks. If this is not possible, make sure you clean any surfaces thoroughly before food preparation.
- Please **do not kiss your cat and avoid contact with your face for 3 weeks**. Radioactive material is excreted in the cat's saliva, which is then deposited onto its fur when they groom. This material is easily absorbed orally, and we do not want you or anyone else becoming contaminated.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after any contact with your cat, its food/water dishes and toys.
- No one under the age of 12 should be allowed to have access to your cat or the room in which it is isolated for the first week, and should avoid close contact (within 3 feet) for the subsequent 2 weeks.
- Pregnant women or women who are breastfeeding should not be allowed near the cat or the contaminated litter or bedding (within 3 feet) for 3 weeks.
- Personal contact should be restricted at first, but can be gradually increased over time based on the following
  - Week 1
    - Close contact (within one foot) such as petting must be avoided completely
    - **Do not** hold the cat or allow it to sit in your lap.
    - The cat **may not** sleep in a bed with a person

- Maintain a distance of more than 3 feet from your pet
  - Week 2
    - Petting is allowed, but should be limited to 20 minutes per day
    - Wash hands after any direct contact
    - **Do not** hold the cat or allow it to sit in your lap
    - The cat **may not** sleep in a bed with a person
    - At all other times maintain a distance of more than 3 feet
  - Week 3
    - Petting is unrestricted
    - Wash hands after any direct contact
    - Laptime/holding should be limited to 30 minutes per day
    - The cat **may not** sleep in a bed with a person
- For 3 weeks, you should use plastic litter pan liners and flushable litter, and you should flush all waste. You should wear protective gloves while cleaning the litter and wash your hands thoroughly afterwards. After this 3 weeks, take any residual litter and double bag it. Leave it in an isolated corner of the garage or basement for another 2 weeks, then discard into the trash. Most landfills do not allow the disposal of low-level radioactive materials, and have sensitive equipment to detect its presence. To avoid being fined, please be sure to follow the above guidelines.
- All cleaning rags, rubber gloves and other discarded material used to clean the animal's litter box or contaminated surroundings (for example if they vomit or eliminate outside the litter box) should be treated as if they are contaminated as well, and kept with the bagged contaminated litter and held for the additional 2 weeks.
- After 3 weeks, you may return to your normal household routine.

#### Medical issues

- If you have any concerns about your pet's response to the therapy or any other issues that develop during this period, please contact us at NHCHVM or your regular veterinarian as soon as possible.
- If your pet requires medical attention, we recommend that you bring him/her back to NHCHVM during their radioactive period. Our facilities are designed to safely house/hospitalized radioactive patients and our staff is trained to handle their special needs. If you return, please call ahead of time so that we may prepare for your arrival.
- If your cat requires medical attention and you wish to take him/her back to your regular vet during this time, call them first and explain the situation. Make sure you bring these instructions to give to your veterinarian. They can contact Dr. Harley or Dr. Rozear at NHCHVM for more information and safety instructions.
- Remember to keep your cat in his/her carrier at all times during transport.