

# Thyroid Cancer Evaluation: What to Expect

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## How do I prepare for thyroid therapy?

- If you take levothyroxine (Synthroid<sup>®</sup>, Levoxyl<sup>®</sup>, Levothroid<sup>®</sup>, Armour Thyroid or Nature-Throid), you must stop taking your medication for 4 weeks before your therapy.
- If you take Cytomel<sup>®</sup> or Liothyronine<sup>®</sup>, you must stop taking your medication for 2 weeks before your therapy.
- You must avoid any excess iodine, including x-rays or CT scans done with injections for 4 weeks before your therapy.
- Start eating the low iodine diet two weeks before your therapy.

## What happens the Thursday before my therapy appointments?

You will have your blood drawn at your local lab to verify that your TSH (Thyroid-Stimulating Hormone) is greater than 30. If your TSH is greater than 30, your scan and therapy can proceed as planned.

## What happens on day 1?

Expect to be at the Nuclear Medicine Department at Michigan Medicine for 3-4 hours.

- We will draw your blood for thyroid and calcium blood tests.
- We will ask you to take a pregnancy test if you are of childbearing age.
- We will ask you to give a urine sample to check for iodine, making sure your low iodine diet was successful.
- We will take preliminary radiation measurements before you receive a radiation dose.

- You will drink your radiation dose through a special straw. This dose has no taste. You will not have to take any radiation exposure precautions at this time.
- We will take reference radiation measurements after the scanning dose of radiation has been absorbed by the stomach.

## **What happens on Day 2?**

Plan on being at the Nuclear Medicine Department at Michigan Medicine all day.

- We will take radiation measurements one day after you drank the scanning dose of radiation. The standard scans are two sets of pictures. The first scan is of the whole body, the second scan is of the chest and neck. Each scan lasts about 20 minutes.
- Your doctor may decide you may need an extra scan. This will be decided after they look at the standard scans. This extra scan is called a SPECT/CT. A SPECT/CT is taken to locate tissues in the surgery site or neck. You will be scheduled for a SPECT/CT even if you do not need it. We cancel it if the doctor says you do not need it.
- You will have a clinic visit with a thyroid Nuclear Medicine doctor after all your scanning is complete. The doctor will go over your scan results and let you know if they recommend radioiodine therapy. If you need more scanning, you will receive scanning during the afternoon of Day 2.
- If your doctor recommends therapy and no further scanning is needed, you will receive therapy on Day 2. Radiation exposure precautions will begin when therapy begins.
- Please do not bring small children to your appointment. Do not plan to stay in a hotel. Plan to go directly home if you receive therapy since radiation exposure precautions will be in place.
- If you receive therapy on Day 2, you will not have any appointments on Day 3.

### **What happens on Day 3?**

If you did not receive therapy on Day 2, plan on being at the Nuclear Medicine Department at Michigan Medicine for 2-3 hours.

- If the doctor has recommended any more scanning, you will have more scanning done. If no further scanning is needed, you will receive therapy and radiation exposure precautions begin.
- Please do not bring small children to your appointment. Do not plan to stay in a hotel. Plan to go directly home if you receive therapy since radiation exposure precautions will be in place.

### **What happens on Day 5?**

Plan on being at the Nuclear Medicine Department at Michigan Medicine for 1 hour.

- You will have a scan to document that the therapy dose has reached the thyroid tissue and is working.
- Begin taking your prescribed thyroid hormone medicine and stop eating the low iodine diet.

### **Who do I call if I have questions?**

If you have any questions, please call the University of Michigan Health System Nuclear Medicine Department at (734) 232 - 6072.

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