

Facts About “KI” (Potassium Iodide)

In the event of any radiation threat or exposure, students will be quickly evacuated to a relocation center. They will be given KI only if directed by a public health official.

What is KI?

KI is the abbreviated chemical name for potassium iodide. It is a form of iodine and found in table salt. If taken in time and at the appropriate dosage, KI protects the Thyroid gland from radioactive iodine and can reduce the risk of developing thyroid cancer as a result of exposure to radiation released during a severe nuclear emergency.

What is the benefit of taking KI during a nuclear emergency?

During a nuclear emergency, people can breathe in or swallow or breathe radioactive iodine. Once inside the body, radioactive iodine can cause a variety of health effects. The thyroid gland is very sensitive to radiation. KI can help prevent thyroid disease if taken within several hours of exposure to radiation released from a nuclear power plant. KI can reduce the risk of developing thyroid cancer as a result of exposure to radioactive iodine, which is especially important for children. While KI can help to protect the thyroid gland, it cannot protect against other health effects caused by radiation.

How soon after a nuclear emergency should KI be taken?

KI should be taken as soon as possible. You should only take one dose and only when public health officials tell you.

Can everyone take KI?

Everyone, including children and babies, can take KI except those who are allergic to iodine or have rare disorders such as dermatitis herpetiformis or hypocomplementemic vasculitis. Children who are less than 150 pounds should take ½ the adult dose, i.e. 65 mg.

Are there any common side effects caused by KI?

KI has few side effects. Children are not at higher risk of side effects. Side effects usually happen when people take more doses than needed. Possible minor side effects are skin rashes, swelling of the salivary glands, metallic taste, burning mouth, sore teeth/gums, stomach upset, diarrhea, or headaches. If you have severe side effects or a severe allergic reaction, call a doctor or go to the nearest hospital.

Where can I get more information?

If you have any further questions about whether your child should be given KI, please contact your pediatrician. Our nursing staff cannot advise you on this issue.