

About Potassium Iodide (KI)

What is potassium iodide?

Potassium iodide is a chemical compound that contains iodine, a chemical necessary for the normal functioning of the thyroid gland. It is known by its chemical symbol, KI. It is manufactured in pill form to be used to prevent the thyroid gland from absorbing a radioactive form of iodine that might be released during an incident at a nuclear power plant. It is intended to protect against thyroid cancer.

How does it work?

KI protects the thyroid gland by satisfying its requirement for iodine. If someone were then exposed to radioactive iodine after taking KI, the radioactive iodine will not be absorbed by the gland. KI has no effect on the radiation itself. It does not provide protection for other parts of the body.

Who can take KI?

Most people can take KI without side effects, but it is a drug and you should consult your doctor before taking any medication. A small number of people could have side effects. Anyone who is allergic to iodine should not take it.

Where can I get KI?

KI is available free of charge from the State of New Hampshire to everyone who lives or works within the 10-mile Emergency Planning Zone around Seabrook Station. Instructions for ordering KI for yourself and your family can be found on the last two pages of this calendar. It may also be purchased over-the-counter in some pharmacies or ordered by telephone, mail or via the Internet. Please see the KI Application Form at the back of this calendar to learn more about obtaining KI for you and your family.

How will I know when to take it?

To be effective, KI should be taken immediately before or within a few hours after exposure to radiation.

What will happen if I take KI without direction from emergency officials?

It is very unlikely that you will suffer any ill effects if you take KI without direction from emergency officials.

Should I have KI for my children?

Yes. Children are more susceptible to thyroid cancer than adults because they are growing rapidly. Doses should be given according to the child's weight or age, if possible. The pills can be cut with a sharp knife and young children should receive their dose in milk, water, applesauce or pudding. See instructions in box for more detail.

Where should I store KI?

Like any other medication, KI should be stored at room temperature away from moisture. It should also be kept in an accessible location so you can remember where it is and get to it in case of emergency. KI has a shelf life of five years.

Who assumes legal responsibility of use of KI?

You do.

The use of KI is voluntary. No one is required to accept it or use it. If you choose to accept KI from the State distribution program, you will be required to sign an informed consent form on which you state that you understand its use and potential risks.