NORTH MACLEAN
Family Vet

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Radioactive Iodine Therapy

For cats with hyperthyroidism

The thyroid gland uses iodine from food to produce thyroid hormones. In hyperthyroidism, the thyroid gland produces too much thyroid hormone, cause a series of changes in your cat's body. These changes can lead to significant disease, but we can treat it.
Radioactive Iodine Therapy, or **I131 Therapy**, uses a rapidly-decaying iodine isotope that is given orally and is absorbed by the body and taken up by the thyroid gland. As it is taken up by the thyroid gland, the radiation destroys part of the thyroid gland, reducing its ability to produce thyroid hormones.

This therapy is considered the **gold standard** in feline hyperthyroidism treatment, and is curative in most cases. In successful cases, these patients should not need on-going medications to manage their thyroid disease, and will need reduced follow-up care compared to patients treated with daily therapies (oral medications or prescription diets).
I131 therapy has only be available at specialist referral centres, **until now**.

What is involved?

After your cat has been diagnosed with hyperthyroidism, several additional tests are needed to determine whether I131 Therapy is appropriate for you and your cat. Blood and urine testing needs to have been performed within 1 month of I131 treatment. This can be performed at your regular GP vet. Your vet will need to provide us with a full clinical history and all test results.
Any thyroid medications or prescription thyroid foods must be stopped 1-2 weeks prior to I131 treatment.

Your cat will be admitted to our practice on a Monday morning for initial assessment and preparation. They will then receive their I131 oral treatment on Thursday. From there, they will be housed in our lead-lined CatCapsula and will receive only brief nursing care twice a day. They will be boarded in the CatCapsula for 5-6 days until the radiation level reduces to the acceptable level.

After 6 days, they may be discharged to home, but **some restrictions still apply**. Physical contact must be limited in the following 2 weeks. This means no cuddles or snuggles! Soiled litter must be quickly disposed of into a bin outside. Certain individuals may be at risk of radiation exposure such as pregnant women, young children, elderly people, or immunocompromised individuals.
For some families, this period of limited contact may be difficult or risky, and you may choose for your cat to board with us for an additional 2 weeks in our cat ward.

Follow-up blood and urine testing is required 1, 3, 6 and 12 months after I131 Therapy to assess how effective the I131 Therapy has been, and assess for any complications.

What risks should be considered?

Patient selection is very important when planning I131 Therapy. Many hyperthyroid cats have other health conditions, and these must be considered when planning a treatment where contact is restricted for 3 weeks.
I131 therapy may still be possible for a cat with other health conditions, but the risks must be carefully considered. Should your cat be at risk for sudden decline in health, any additional care may not be possible

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for 7 days or longer. You must be aware of these risks, and understand the implications for you and your cat.

What complications do I need to be aware of?

There are three expected outcomes of I131 Therapy;

- Euthyroid: The patient's thyroid levels become normal (treatment is successful)
- Iatrogenic Hypothyroidism: The patient's thyroid levels reduce too low and they become hypothyroid (treatment is successful but with complications)
- Persistent Hyperthyroidism: The patient's thyroid levels remain persistently high (treatment is unsuccessful)

The patient becoming euthyroid is the most common outcome, with more than 85% of treated cats becoming stable.
5-15% of treated cats may become hypothyroid, with a proportion of them later returning to euthyroid (expected 5% or less remaining persistently hypothyroid). Some of these cats may need daily medication for a period of time, or permanently.
However, the proportion of cases that experience this complication is expected to be low.
2-5% of cases will remain persistently hyperthyroid. In these cases, it is mostly likely that the patient has malignant thyroid neoplasia. Your vet can talk to you more about the management options in these cases.

What costs are involved?

The cost of I131 Therapy at NMFV is a flat fee of $2035. This does not include the pre-treatment blood and urine testing that is required, as this is often performed by your preferred vet. Similarly, the follow-up blood and urine tests are not included, as this is often performed by your preferred vet. You will need to speak with your vet about the fees associated with pre- and post- treatment work-up.
If you wish to have these tests performed with us at NMFV then you are most welcome to, and we can provide estimates for the tests required.

If you wish to have your cat board with us for the 2-week period after their initial 7-day treatment, there will be an additional cost of $788.10.

How are bookings made?

You must contact us directly to book your cat for I131 Therapy at NMFV. Our team will ensure you have all the relevant information. You can either call us on (07) 3297 0803, or email our dedicated team at radiation@northmacleanfamilyvet.com.au and we will be in touch with you.
A non-refundable deposit is required to secure a booking. The remaining amount is expected to be paid in full on morning your cat is admitted.

If you have any questions, or would like to make a booking, please phone us on (07) 3297 0803 or email us at radiation@northmacleanfamilyvet.com.au
We look forward to meeting you!