

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Harbin Clinic: No Need for Residents of North West Georgia to Stockpile or Take Potassium Iodide

ROME, GA, March 25 -- The release of radioactive particles into the atmosphere in Japan by damaged nuclear power reactors pose no immediate threat to people in North West Georgia, and there is no need for people to take potassium iodide, according to Harbin Clinic Medical Director Al Diaz, MD.

Many in the community are asking Harbin Clinic doctors if they should buy potassium iodide tablets, stockpile them in case the radiation is carried by the winds to this area, or begin taking potassium iodide now to counteract any potential radiation exposure. Potassium iodide is given to people exposed to radiation to prevent damage to the thyroid gland and possible thyroid cancer.

According to Diaz, there is an abundant supply of potassium iodide and it is very unlikely that there would be a shortage if the pills were needed in North West Georgia.

But if people are worried about radiation exposure, they can purchase and store potassium iodide in their homes. Diaz stresses that people should not take the supplement without instructions from their personal physician or a disaster order from the government.

The US Nuclear Regulatory Commission provides potassium iodide pills to states with nuclear power plants, enabling states to distribute the pills in a disaster to residents within 10 miles of a plant.

Diaz explained that iodide is the gasoline that powers the thyroid gland. Iodide is needed by the thyroid gland for normal health, and people get iodide from food and oxidized salt.

“Radiation attaches to naturally occurring iodide,” Diaz said. This is the reason Japan has stopped all shipments of farm crops from the affected area. Radiation has attached to the iodide in the vegetables and plants. “When people who have been exposed to radiation take potassium iodide pills, it floods their thyroid with clean iodide, blocking the absorption of radioactive iodide,” Diaz explained.

Potassium iodide appears to be an effective treatment for exposure to radiation. According to Diaz, “After the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident, winds blew a radioactive cloud over much of Eastern Europe. Poland distributed potassium iodide to people exposed to the radiation while Ukraine, Belarus, and the affected area in Russia did not. Thyroid cancer rates have remained unchanged in Poland while there has been a dramatic spike in the number of cancer cases for those living in Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia.”

Diaz warns that, unless there is a nuclear disaster, people should not take large doses of potassium iodide without instructions from their doctor. The supplement is generally safe, but large doses can alter the thyroid or cause an over active thyroid.

While the release of radiation in Japan will most likely not affect the people in North West Georgia, Diaz believe this does provide an opportunity to educate the public on the need to prepare for a disaster. “A disaster can happen at any time and at any place,” Diaz said. “Every home should have a disaster plan and a disaster kit that includes clean water, food, and basic medical supplies. For those who live near a nuclear power plant, potassium iodide may be appropriate but potassium iodide should only be taken when directed by authorities.”

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