

Self Care for Potential or Actual Radiation Exposure

Here are some self-care tips for actual or potential radiation exposure that you can use in addition to potassium iodide (as instructed by public health officials) that I thought that I would share with you and your families. I have been a student of the radiation exposure issue for 25 years – ever since I became a nurse at the Infant Specialty Care Unit at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles where I often needed to hold infants for their tests and procedures that involved radiation. PS - Although I am not a vet, Dr. Pitcairn recommends the same remedies for dogs and cats that I do for humans. In addition, consider self-care for radiation exposure whenever you have x-rays (dental or body), MRI’s, CT Scans, or mammograms. (See comments below specifically on mammograms and dental x-rays.)

Basic Self Care

Stay indoors if and when health officials report drift to your area. You may need to Duct tape window jams and doorways. Animals need to be kept inside so prepare for that. Have water/food supply.

Be sure to take vitamin C with bioflavonoids (rutin). You cannot overdose on this as it is water soluble. Diarrhea signals that you have taken more than enough – unless you are trying to excrete toxins in which case diarrhea is preferred to retention.

Homeopathic/Herbal Silicea 6X, 12X, 6C, or 30C. An Ayurvedic physician shared this remedy with me back when I was holding babies for radiation tests and I have used it ever since he suggested 3-4 tablets under the tongue 4 times a day if known to have been exposed. You can also drink Horsetail tea (*Equisetum arvense*). This remedy not only helps to excrete radiation from the body it also strengthens bones and spirit and is restorative and stabilizing to the whole body. For more info on homeopathy go to Dana Ullman’s website <http://www.homeopathic.com/>

Diet – Include rolled oats with dried fruits like apricots and dates.

Herbal Self Care

If you have my book *The Integrative Herb Guide for Nurses* you can find this info in the kelp chapter. Kelp (also known as Kombu) and its constituent sodium alginate have been shown to effectively reduce the absorption of heavy metals and radiation such as cesium and strontium 90 in humans. Kelp absorbs radioactive substance or heavy metals and carries it out in the stool. The Japanese ARE aware of this and often routinely include kelps in their diet (not only because of the radiation issue). I have had a number of conversations over the years with Japanese nurses and traditional healers about what happened after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the USA...It is well known that at St. Francis hospital in Japan, people were said to have survived the nuclear fallout because they ate **miso soup and sea vegetables**. A Japanese colleague confirmed that there was research being done on this.

There a few things to know about eating sea vegetables which I have learned from experts such as American Algologist (scientist who studies sea vegetation) Dr. Ryan Drum and Mr. Shep Erhart, owner of [Maine Coast Sea Vegetables](http://www.seaveg.com/shop/index.php?main_page=page&id=9&chapter=2): http://www.seaveg.com/shop/index.php?main_page=page&id=9&chapter=2

Meditate on the mechanism... Much of our integrative insight on health partnering with sea vegetables such as kelp comes from understanding the mechanism of action (that is the personality and qualities) of the plant. The seaweed receives its own nourishment from the seawater by being able to absorb nutrients from the passing water. Kelp is clathritic – it moves through the water absorbing nutrients. Kelp also swells considerably when in the presence of water. In the body, one of kelp's therapeutic actions is related to the algin, a viscous fiber found in the plant, and its ability to absorb water and remove toxins (and possibly minerals too) from the digestive tract. But read on...

Purchasing Kelp... Kelp has been harvested from the oceans and eaten for millennia. Whole dried kelp and kelp supplements are also sold. Some kelp used in tablets and powders is harvested en masse by large barges that go through the ocean water cutting the kelp much the way a lawnmower cuts grass. Because the kelp is put into the barge and it has such a high metabolic rate, formalin is used to keep the kelp from decomposing. However, “organic” sea vegetables are not preserved with formalin. It is best to buy fresh dried whole leaf but you can also consider powder or granules. Fresh kelp powder should be greenish in color, not brown. You should also be aware that due to its clathritic nature, kelps do absorb chemicals and heavy metals from the environment. Organic kelps are typically harvested as far away as possible from sewer outfalls, industrial sites, and mining operations. Organic sea vegetable companies test for mercury, lead, cadmium and arsenic levels as well as water born contaminants in their plants. All sea vegetables are high in potassium iodide and alginate but kelp is highest. Kelp in supplement form contains varying amounts of iodine because the iodine evaporates during storage (Liewendahl & Gordin, 1974).

Consumption and Conservation – What you need to know now... It is best to begin eating sea vegetables in small amounts, such as a crushed whole herb **condiment**, with lots of water so that the body can get used to metabolizing them. Do not eat excessive amounts of sea vegetables especially for the first 3-4 months. It takes up to four months for the body to adjust to digesting sea vegetables, so be sure to chew them thoroughly. Sea vegetables are cold and damp – energetically speaking and therefore - like ice cream – are a challenge for the spleen. If you are not digesting the sea vegetables you will see pieces of the plant excreted in your stool. It is best to eat sea vegetables as if they are a condiment like other culinary herbs. Moderation is important not only to your health but also for conservation of sea vegetable populations. At this time (March 2011) the harvested stores of organic sea vegetables, particularly kelp, are at a seasonal low. Kelp will not be ready to be harvested again for at least one month. Therefore everyone should be particularly aware of eating kelp in moderation. Stop eating kelp if excessive loss of weight; goiter; irritation of the eyes; severe skin eruptions; inflammation of the mouth, throat, and gastrointestinal tract; diarrhea; or increased salivation occur. Do not eat kelp if you have a known hyperthyroid condition (goiter). Also, in Traditional Chinese Medicine, kelp (Sargassum) is contraindicated when using licorice root (Bensky & Gamble, 1993).

Children... Excessive ingestion of seaweeds by children is not advised because of the possibility of causing hyperthyroidism or hypothyroidism (Newall et al., 1996); however, children can eat kelp in small amounts, in soups or as a condiment with rice, for instance.

Where to buy Kelp? You can buy organic Maine Kelp or Japanese Kombu. A 2 ounce package of kelp typically costs about \$5. Put a postage stamp-size piece or more in rice or soup when you cook it. It will rehydrate and is completely edible. You can also crush it dry and put a ½ tsp in soup such as miso soup. It will rehydrate in smaller pieces. I typically recommend the whole dried plant to kelp powder even if certified organic (see info above). Chew well.

What is Cesium? <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caesium>

Radiation Exposure during Mammograms and Dental X-Rays

In 1998 I did a review of literature for a physician at Rose Medical Center in Denver on the purported decrease in risk of cancer as related to mammography and breast biopsy. She had undergone bilateral mastectomy the year before for breast cancer in one breast. After working with Dr. Don Vickery at Health Decisions International, I was well versed in physician use of scientific evidence for making patient recommendations. I had been hired as a consultant to physicians at Rose and then was made Director of the Medical Library where I did such reviews all the time. The literature at that time DID NOT support the use of mammography for decreasing risk of breast cancer and I have not been convinced otherwise to this day especially in women who are not at risk given their family history, age etc. Biopsy at the time was done routinely whenever there was a suspicious lump in a woman's breast but now the diagnostic test is well known to often SPREAD certain types of cancer cells. Mammography is a nice idea but is not fully supported by evidence - a study was published in a level one medical journal "Medical Hypothesis" in 1997 in which 10 years of data was examined. But administrators still needed to pay off the debt associated with mammography machines. This may sound a bit cynical but is actually born out in current practice - that clinicians today are decreasing the recommendations for mammography. And clinicians who advocate for women's health have also pointed out that there are no such painful diagnostic tests for testicular cancer as there are for sensitive breast tissue. Why such gender discrepancy? Over treatment exists in males too. A few weeks ago the media announced (New York Times and Wall Street Jnl) the reports about the change in standards of care in the treatment of the prostate and moving toward less reliance on PSA tests.

Exposure to radiation during dental x-rays is a concern. The mouth is near the brain, the thyroid, and sensitive breast tissue and therefore people should be protected from over exposure. There have been changes in the technology which are said to increase safety to patients and technicians. But I have not read any studies that support the increased complacency in office staff. People who ask for the lead cover should not be shamed but more importantly – according the **standards of ethical health care** people should be given the choice to cover **anything** that is not meant to be irradiated. The choice should not be made by a dentist or anyone other than the patient let alone an x-ray technician.

I have searched the literature and most importantly – I have found **no support** for yearly x-rays. Unfortunately the dental offices make money and pay off their equipment and are allowed to charge for x-rays once a year as part of preventive care. But is this best practice supported by evidence? No. So you can choose to refuse the diagnostic x-rays especially if your teeth are status quo or in good shape. At the very least have the conversation about the benefits and risks with your dentist before allowing the radiation exposure. There are also other options. For example, there are holistic dentists who use other means of diagnosing early cavities and periodontal disease. Talk with them about their scientific concerns and alternatives!

I hope that this is helpful information.

Gesundheit!

Dr. Martha Mathews Libster- Director, Golden Apple Healing Arts