

I131 at CAVES

The Preferred First Line Therapy for Hyperthyroid Cats

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is Iodine 131 (I131) the preferred method?

Iodine 131 is now the standard of care for cats with hyperthyroidism. I131 has shown to dramatically increase the life expectancy of cats with hyperthyroidism.¹ The average life expectancy for methimazole therapy is 2 years where I131 is 4 years. I131 is 95% effective. Most of the patients who do not respond to a first treatment with I131 can be successfully treated for a second time.

Other therapies such as surgery and methimazole/PTU have potential side effects.

Surgery's disadvantages include:

- Anesthesia required
- Surgical procedure / tissue damage and healing
- High probability of recurrence (often requires additional I-131 treatment)
- Does not treat ectopic thyroid tissue
- Hypocalcemia from loss of parathyroid tissue

Methimazole/PTU disadvantages include:

- Patient must be "pilled" one to three times a day for the rest of his/her life.
- Cost can run from \$600-\$900 a year for medications and medical monitoring.
- Does not cure the disease.
- Side effects are common (approximately 18%)
 - Anorexia
 - Vomiting
 - Lethargy
 - Bleeding
 - Hepatopathy
 - Thrombocytopenia
 - Leukopenia

I131 is best suited as a first line therapy for stable patients without significant heart disease, GI disease, kidney disease, and liver disease. Dr. Dutton is happy to discuss your patient's particular medical condition.

Our program includes a pre-treatment exam, review of the diagnostic findings, the I131 treatment, hospitalization in our nuclear medicine ward and consultation with the referring veterinarian on the post-treatment T4 testing.

2. Will my cat experience any side effects?

There are no side effects directly associated with the injection.

As your cat's thyroid levels return to normal, you may notice changes in activity and appetite back to a more normal state.

These are some very uncommon side effects:

- a. Cats may develop a too low thyroid level. Typically this resolves within 6 months.
- b. Infrequently your pet may have a voice change.

c. Very infrequently, a pre-existing kidney dysfunction that the hyperthyroid state masked may become more evident. Most times this kidney dysfunction is of no clinical significance or can be managed conservatively.

3. When can my cat come home?

We will monitor your pet's radiation level during their stay with us. Your pet will be released once they have reached a safe radiation level according to State and Federal requirements. Cats that are dismissed do have a slightly higher radiation level than the normal background level. Because of this, certain precautions need to be taken for two weeks after dismissal.

4. Can I visit my cat during their stay?

State and Federal requirements prohibit your from visiting your pet while under our care. You can 'virtually' visit them via our website at www.i131nh.com. And we welcome you calling daily for an update on your pet.

5. Are there any follow-up visits at your facility?

No, we operate as a referral practice for the I131. Your regular veterinarian will perform both the pre-treatment and post-treatment care and testing.

Contact Information:

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¹ Milner JM et al. Survival times for cats with hyperthyroidism treated with iodine 131, methimazole, or both: 167 cases (1996-2003). JAVMA 2006 228:4, p 559-563.