



# Newburyport Public Schools

## Potassium Iodide (KI)

### Information for Parents

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This fact sheet is about a policy for people, especially those who live within ten miles of a nuclear power plant, who may be exposed to radiation from a nuclear plant emergency. In December 2001, the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said if there was a radiological emergency, people should take a drug that would help protect them from thyroid cancer. This drug is called **potassium iodide (KI)**. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health agrees. The questions and answers below will give you more information. The Department of Public Health, the Center for Disease Control, the Newburyport Health Department, and your Newburyport School Nurses feel that the benefits of taking KI are much greater than the risks.

#### **What is potassium iodide (KI) and what is it used for?**

If there is a radiological emergency from a nuclear plant, large amounts of something called radioiodine could be put into the air and this could hurt your thyroid gland, or even cause thyroid cancer later on. You could breathe in the radioiodine or eat food that has some radioiodine in it. When you take the KI pill, it protects the thyroid gland from being harmed.

#### **What age group has the highest risk from exposure to radioiodine?**

Young children have the highest risk. We have learned this from looking at children in Russia and Japan and other areas that were exposed to the radioiodine from the Chernobyl and Fukushima nuclear power plant accidents.

#### **Only a “YES” on the Confidential Health Form provides your child with KI during an emergency. When should KI be taken?**

KI should be taken before or just after you are exposed to radioiodine and your child will receive KI from their teacher or school nurse only if you have checked off “yes” on the Student Confidential Health Form. We are planning ahead in the unlikely event of an emergency. Nurses would give KI to your child only when instructed to do so by the local health department.

#### **What are the risks of taking Potassium Iodide (KI)?**

Taking KI is safe for most people. KI should not be taken if someone:

- Is allergic to iodine
- Has Graves Disease
- Has any other thyroid illness
- Takes thyroid medication

Be sure to list any of these conditions on the nurses’ confidential health form.

#### **Can people have reactions to KI?**

In general, most people who have taken KI have not had any reactions (side effects). If people did have a reaction, it did not last very long. In a few cases, babies had a reaction in their thyroids. Adults who had reactions had stomach problems or a rash. The federal government thinks the benefits of taking KI are much greater than the risks.

#### **How much KI will be administered?**

At the moment, KI only comes in a 130mg tablet. In an emergency, it is safe for school aged children to take the whole pill. Pills will be crushed for children who cannot swallow pills.

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**For further information:** see the Newburyport School Nurses’ web page at [www.newburyport.k12.ma.us](http://www.newburyport.k12.ma.us) and search for “potassium iodide.”

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[http://www.plymouth.k12.ma.us/uploaded/District/Health\\_Services/Health\\_Records/Potassium\\_Iodide\\_%28KI%29\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://www.plymouth.k12.ma.us/uploaded/District/Health_Services/Health_Records/Potassium_Iodide_%28KI%29_Fact_Sheet.pdf)