

Japan's Nuclear Emergency: What Ontarians Should Know

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a health care professional about any health concerns you have, and before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.

Am I at risk of radiation exposure from the damaged nuclear facility in Japan?

Based on current information, there is no health risk for Ontarians from the damaged nuclear facility in Japan. For up to date information, please refer to [Health Canada](#).

Do I need to be concerned if I have friends or family returning from Japan?

There is no health risk associated with radiation to Canadians traveling into or out of Japan, provided they have not been within the evacuation zone established by Japan.

There is no information that suggests that people returning to Canada from Japan would have received contamination resulting from the current nuclear situation in that country. People in Japan should follow the advice of Japanese authorities and not enter the evacuation zones around the nuclear facilities.

If I am going to Japan, what precautions do I need to take?

For travel advice on Japan and information for Canadians living and working in Japan, please refer to the [Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada](#). For health specific advice on traveling to Japan, please refer to the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#).

What should I do if I, or someone I know, is experiencing increased anxiety related to the events in Japan?

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has links to useful [tools and resources](#) for coping with global disasters.

What is KI?

KI (also called potassium iodide) is a salt of stable (non-radioactive) iodine. Stable iodine is an important chemical needed by the body to make thyroid hormones. Most of the iodine in our bodies comes from the food we eat.

How does KI work?

In a nuclear emergency, radioactive iodine may be released from a nuclear generating station, and could enter our bodies (by inhalation or ingestion through contaminated milk or food) and be absorbed by our thyroid gland. Radioactive iodine absorbed by the thyroid can cause medical problems.

KI works by blocking radioactive iodine from entering the thyroid. The KI fills up the thyroid with stable iodine so it cannot absorb the radioactive iodine for a period of time. As a result, the radioactive iodine will have no place to accumulate and your body will excrete it naturally.

In what situations would KI be used?

In the event of a provincial nuclear emergency, provincial authorities will provide information on where to obtain KI and when to take it.

The consumption of KI will only be recommended in situations where a significant amount of radioactive iodine has been released. Not all radiological emergencies involve radioactive iodine.

KI, like all medications, may have adverse effects and should not be taken unless there is a clear public health recommendation to do so.

Do I need to take KI to counter the effects of the nuclear event in Japan?

No.

KI is not recommended for use by people in Ontario concerned about potential risks from the damaged nuclear facility in Japan.

The Government of Canada is monitoring and assessing the situation at nuclear facility in Japan in order to assess any potential risks to Canadians.

KI is only recommended for people who have been exposed to high levels of radioactive iodine.

I live near a nuclear power facility in Ontario, should I be stockpiling KI?

KI is primarily stocked in proximity to nuclear facilities and only made available for recommended evacuation zones as a precautionary measure.

In the event of a nuclear emergency, and only when there is clear public health direction to do so, provincial authorities will provide information on where to obtain KI and when to take it. It does not need to be purchased and is not required for those who do not live near a nuclear facility.

If you live near a local nuclear power facility, contact your local municipality to learn more about nuclear preparedness and response planning in your jurisdiction. They will have information on planning around access to KI for residents near the facility.

How will I know if there is a need to take KI?

If there is a need for Ontarians to take KI, provincial authorities will provide instructions through radio and TV bulletins on where to get KI and when to take the recommended dose.

Where can I get more information?

The following websites are providing up to date information on the situation in Japan and any effects on Canada:

- [Health Canada](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)
- [Public Safety Canada](#)
- [Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade](#)
- [Canadian Food Inspection Agency](#)

For more information, please contact ServiceOntario INFOLine at: 1-866-532-3161.