



Health action in crises

FAQs: Japan nuclear concerns

5 April 2011

Personal protective measures

How can I protect myself?

- Keep informed by obtaining accurate and authoritative information (e.g., information from authorities delivered by radio, TV or the Internet) and following your government's instructions.
- The decision to take potassium iodide should be based on information provided by national health authorities who will be in the best position to determine if this step is warranted.

If I have been exposed to high levels of radiation, what should I do?

- If you are coming indoors after radiation exposure, undress in the doorway to avoid further contamination in your home or shelter. Remove clothing and shoes and place them in a plastic bag. Seal the bag and place it in a safe location away from living areas, children, and pets.
- Shower or bathe with warm water and soap.
- Notify authorities that you may have contaminated clothing and personal belongings to be handled appropriately and disposed of according to accepted national procedures.

When people are advised to stay indoors, what does this mean?

- When a radiological or nuclear event occurs, public health authorities may order residents in the affected areas to stay indoors rather than evacuate. You may be advised to take shelter at home, at work, or in public shelters. Shelter can provide protection from external exposure and from inhalation of radioactive material.
- If you are advised to stay indoors, you should find the safest room in your house or office building: if possible, one which has no windows and no external doors. Ventilation systems, such as heating and cooling systems, should be shut down.
- In sub-zero temperatures, it is important to keep warm. If you have been instructed to shelter in your home, office, or other structure, it may not be safe to burn fuels—such as gas, coal, or wood—to keep warm. Doing so may result in carbon monoxide poisoning, which can occur when rooms are not adequately ventilated. If it is available, electrical forms of heating are safer.

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