



Health action in crises

FAQs: Japan nuclear concerns

5 April 2011

Current risk

What is the current risk of radiation-related health problems in Japan for those residing near the reactor in comparison to those in other parts of Japan?

- Radiation-related health consequences will depend on exposure, which is dependant on several things, including: the amount and type of radiation released from the reactor; weather conditions, such as wind and rain; a person's proximity to the plant; and the amount of time spent in irradiated areas.
- The Government of Japan's recent actions in response to events at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant are in line with the existing recommendations for radiation exposure. The Government has evacuated individuals who were living within a 20-kilometre radius around the Fukushima Daiichi plant. Those living between 20 km and 30 km from the plant are being asked to evacuate voluntarily. In general, people living farther away are at lower risk than those who live nearby.
- As and if the situation changes, the Government of Japan may change their advice to the public; WHO is following the situation closely.

Is there a risk of radioactive exposure from food contamination?

- Yes, there is a risk of exposure as a result of contamination in food.
- However, contaminated food would have to be consumed over prolonged periods to represent a risk to human health.
- The presence of radioactivity in some vegetables and milk has been confirmed and some of the initial food monitoring results show radioactive iodine detected in concentrations above Japanese regulatory limits. Radioactive caesium has also been detected.
- Local government authorities have advised residents to avoid these food and have implemented measures to prevent their sale and distribution.

Are there health risks to people living outside of Japan from radiation emitted into the atmosphere from damaged Japanese nuclear power plants?

Thus far, there are no health risks to people living in other countries from radioactive material released into the atmosphere from the Japanese nuclear power plants. Radiation levels measured to date in other countries

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1. [Current risk](#)
 2. [Ionizing radiation](#)
 3. [Human exposure to ionizing radiation](#)
 4. [Travel advice](#)
 5. [Health effects](#)
 6. [Public health actions](#)
 7. [Personal protective measures](#)
 8. [Food safety](#)
 9. [Water contamination](#)
 10. [WHO's response](#)

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