

Basic Facts regarding radiation exposure resulting from the nuclear plant accident caused by "Tohoku" area earthquake.

Latest update: March 20, 2011

1. Precautions for people in surrounding areas of the nuclear accident

(1) Obtain the information from reliable sources such as radio, TV, cable TV, and wireless community systems. Don't be confused by rumors. If you are instructed by your local government to go to shelters or evacuate, do so immediately.

(2) If you take shelters indoors, close all the doors and windows.
Switch off the ventilator to avoid air-intake from outside.
Pay close attention to the latest information and instructions.

(3) In case of evacuation, act calmly.

(4) Don't eat agricultural products harvested at the refuge area until they are confirmed to be safe.

2. Precautions for evacuation from home

(1) To avoid inhalation of radioactive materials, cover your mouth and nose with wet folded towels or handkerchief or other materials. With this measure, you can avoid inhaling most radioactive materials.

(2) Wear hat or other head-covering so as not to expose your skin to the air.

3. What kind of effects do the radioactive materials in the atmosphere have on our bodies? How about the health effect in relation to radiation doses?

Leaked radioactive materials in the air may come down and remain deposited on the earth surfaces, buildings, and other places. In this case, radioactive materials may be taken inside of our body by ingesting contaminated water and agricultural products.

Basic facts regarding radiation exposure resulting from the nuclear plant accident - Part 2

1. "Radiation levels have increased in the Kanto area" according to the media. Are we going to be all right?

"Ten or a hundred times higher amounts of radiation than the normal background level" sounds very abnormal, but the fact is that it is still not hazardous to our health.

Radiation levels observed at Tokyo, Tochigi, Gunma, Chiba, Kanagawa, Yamanashi, and Shizuoka prefectures between 9:00am and 5:00pm of March 15 is 1 micro Sievert (μSv) per hour at the highest. If we were continuously exposed to this level for one year, the total radiation level would be almost the same level as one CT scan you have in the hospital, so clearly this level is not hazardous to our health. Moreover, this level of radiation (1 μSv / hour) is not likely to continue.

2. Can I take a radiation exposure measurement at NIRS?

National Institute of Radiological Sciences (NIRS) has conducted radiation measurement for the people who were working at the nuclear energy plant in Fukushima prefecture yesterday and the day before yesterday. So far, we have not found anyone who needed the decontamination procedure. Therefore, those who are not instructed to go to shelters or evacuate by local governments do not need to have their radiation level checked.

Radiation measurements are conducted at the shelters in devastated areas, but the purpose of these tests are to confirm that there is no hazardous effect for these people.

3. What do we do for decontamination? How can I decontaminate at home?

Decontamination can be accomplished by taking a bath, shampoo, and doing laundry. In a sense, daily routines already offer protection for decontamination.

4. I am pregnant. Am I going to be affected by radiation?

Basic facts regarding radiation exposure - Part 3

- 1. "The media is reporting food contaminated by radiation. Are there any precautions we should take when we eat vegetables or other foods?"**

Most radiation detected on vegetables is found on the surface. Rinsing thoroughly, boiling (dispose of cooking liquid), and paring skin off vegetables can reduce the degree of contamination.

- 2. For the inhabitants of evacuation areas and those who have been instructed to stay indoors, what should be done with clothing that has been detected to have some level of radiation?**

To this point, no person has been found to have any level of radiation that is harmful to their health. After laundering in the regular manner, clothes are safe to wear as usual.

- 3. What should be done with laundry water used for decontamination?**

It is safe to allow the water to drain into the normal sewage system.

- 4. Is it safe to come in contact with people from affected areas?**

When receiving an evacuee from a radiation affected area, have them remove their outer clothing, and take a shower first. Extra care should be given to shampooing thoroughly, washing face and body, and scrubbing skin surfaces around the finger nails. It is safe to allow shower water to drain normally. The car used to evacuate may also have radioactive contaminants, so going through a regular car wash is sufficient. That water may also drain into the sewage system.

Basic facts about radiation exposure Part 4

1. I am living in the Tokyo metropolitan area (Tokyo, Chiba, Kanagawa). Is it better to avoid going out?

As of now, the amount of radiation in the Kanto region is found to be very small. It is fine to lead a normal life as long as the effects of the accident do not significantly extend.

2. I live 50 km away from the accident site in Fukushima. Is it safe to open windows or use the air conditioning?

Opening windows or ventilating through air conditioning does not have harmful effects on your health. You don't have to worry as long as the accident does not significantly expand.

3. I live in the Tokyo metropolitan area. I got wet in the rain a few days after the nuclear accident. Am I OK?

Rain is thought to contain radioactive substance released from the accident, but the amount is insignificant. Based on the calculation from the reported radioactive concentration in the air, the amount of radioactive contaminant from rain is not hazardous to your health even if it is stuck on the skin. You don't have to worry.

4. I have heard that radioactive substance is detected also in tap water, but I drank it before it was reported. Am I OK? Should tap water not be used for other purposes as well as drinking?

It is not harmful for your health to drink tap water for a short period of time. The Ministry of Health shows the following views to prepare for a restricted intake of tap water that could be issued due to the nuclear accident in Fukushima.

- Avoid drinking tap water.
- It poses no problem to use tap water for daily routines such as bathing or washing hands.
- It is fine to drink tap water if there is no alternative.

Please pay close attention to information provided from your municipal government.