

## Patient information factsheet

# Caring for or comforting a relative or friend during a nuclear medicine therapeutic procedure

We have given you this factsheet because you have offered to provide physical or emotional support to your relative or friend during their nuclear medicine therapeutic procedure. It contains important information about being a 'carer and comforter' and explains the potential risks.

If you are happy to act as your relative or friend's carer and comforter after reading this factsheet, we will ask you to complete a form before their procedure. We will explain the form to you and answer any questions you may have.

### What are 'carers and comforters'?

Individuals who knowingly and willingly expose themselves to a small amount of ionising radiation in order to care for or support someone undergoing or having undergone a procedure that involves radiation, excluding healthcare professionals, are legally known as 'carers and comforters'.

### Are there any risks associated with being a carer and comforter?

As part of your relative or friend's nuclear medicine treatment, they will receive a higher level of ionising radiation than is typically used in diagnostic tests. This will result in them becoming temporarily radioactive for at least two weeks after their procedure. As you are providing care and support during this time, you may also be exposed to a small amount of radiation.

The amount of radiation you may be exposed to will depend on:

- the type of treatment
- how much care and support you need to provide (during the procedure and in the following days)

The amount of radiation a carer or comforter is typically exposed to during this time is similar to the natural background radiation you would receive in the UK over approximately four and a half months.

We will do everything we can to ensure that the amount of radiation you are exposed to is kept as low as possible. However, we are legally required to provide you with information relating to the level of radiation you will be exposed to and the related risk.

**If there is any possibility that you may be pregnant, please notify a member of staff before the procedure.**

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## Increased risk of cancer

The small amount of radiation you will be exposed to during your relative or friend's procedure can very slightly increase your risk of developing cancer later on in your life. The older you are, the lower your risk of developing cancer in the future will be.

## How can I minimise the amount of radiation I am exposed to?

Follow the advice below to help minimise the amount of radiation you are exposed to.

### Time

Try to keep the time spent close to your relative or friend as low as possible (especially when the radiation dose is first given as this is when they will be most radioactive).

### Distance

The further away you are from your relative or friend, the less radiation you will be exposed to.

### Good hygiene

Some of the radiation we give your relative or friend will come out of their body in their bodily fluids, such as their urine. For this reason, it is important that you wash your hands or any other areas that may have come into contact with their bodily fluids using soap and water. We will offer you some disposable gloves if you need to handle nappies, incontinence pads or catheter bags.

## Is there anything else I need to know?

After certain treatments, your relative or friend may need to have some medical imaging procedures (for example, a CT scan). If you are providing physical support during these imaging procedures, it is important that your relative or friend remains still while the images are being taken. Moving during this time may result in the images needing to be retaken.

If your relative or friend needs a CT scan and you need to be present in the room, a member of the imaging team will advise you where to stand and will provide you with a protective lead apron to wear.

If you are a patient at one of our hospitals and need this document translated, or in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email **PFSH@uhs.nhs.uk**

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **[www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport)**