

Pennsylvania Health Department Announces Special Potassium Iodide Distribution

Paranoia

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Potassium iodide (KI) tablets will be available at a number of special locations on Thursday, Aug. 10, for people who live within a 10-mile radius of Pennsylvania's five nuclear power plants, Health Secretary Dr. Calvin B. Johnson said today. The tablets are routinely available at state, county and local health offices.

When taken as directed, KI will help to, temporarily, protect the thyroid gland against the harmful effects of radioactive iodine in the unlikely event of a release of radiation.

The Aug. 10 supply is intended for residents who missed past special distribution events; recently moved near a nuclear power plant, or do not realize that KI tablets are regularly available through county and municipal health departments and state health centers.

"While taking a tablet of KI when directed is very important, obeying an evacuation order is still the most effective action you can take to protect yourself and your family," said Dr. Johnson. "KI tablets only provide temporary protection for the thyroid gland against cancer and hypothyroid conditions. They do not protect against other types of health problems that may result from exposure to radiation, and the tablets should never be taken unless directed by the Governor or the state health secretary."

The Department of Health first made KI tablets available to residents in 2002. Since that time, residents have been able to pick up tablets anytime at local and state health department offices. To date, almost one million KI tablets have been distributed to residents, businesses and schools located within the 10-mile radius of a nuclear facility. People who have KI tablets from previous distributions do not need to replace them.

Two tablets are issued for each individual who lives or works within the 10-mile radius of a nuclear facility. People will be allowed to pick up tablets for family members and those who are unable to pick them up on their own, and will be asked to sign for them. Instructions on how to store the tablets and when to take them will also be provided.

Secretary Johnson recommends that residents should discuss any questions about their health and whether KI is appropriate for all members of their family with their family doctor.

Pennsylvania's five nuclear power plants are: Beaver Valley Power Station, Limerick Generating Station, Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station, Susquehanna Steam Electric Station and Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station. More than 640,000 people live within a 10-mile radius of these facilities.