

Vienna, March 14, 2022

Statement on iodine self-medication

Dear National Delegates,

Due to the current situation in Ukraine, many people are wondering whether the prophylactic intake of iodine preparations can be beneficial in the event of a nuclear incident.

The answer to this question is **definitely NO**. The potential harm to the thyroid is by far exceeding any theoretical benefit. Additionally, to date, there is no evidence of an increase in radiation levels in Europe.

Therefore, the European Association of Nuclear Medicine advises the following:

- Prophylactic intake of iodine-containing preparations is not recommended and may cause adverse health effects, such as:

- risk of thyroid goitre, which may lead to shortness of breath
- risk of developing autoimmune diseases of the thyroid gland
- in pregnant women, it may suppress the development of the fetal thyroid gland
- hypertension
- heart arrhythmia
- muscle weakness
- Lugol's solution may additionally cause digestive disorders, such as irritation, diarrhea or kidney damage

- The intake of iodine preparations might be justified for specific groups of people in the immediate vicinity of a nuclear accident site and only following medical instructions by the competent health authorities.

In such an event, it may then also be advised for other people, depending on the speed and direction of a radioactive contamination spread.

Hence, in the event of damage to a nuclear power plant, please stay indoors, remain calm and follow the instructions provided by the local authorities with regards to the uptake of iodine-containing preparations.

For further information on the subject, please refer to the World Health Organization's Guidelines: *Iodine thyroid blocking: Guidelines for use in planning and responding to radiological and nuclear emergencies* (2017). Available here:

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241550185>

Yours sincerely,

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