

Letter to in the event of a radiation emergency

To the parents/legal guardians of:

Name, class:.....

Date:

Dear parent or guardian,

Information on a **radiation emergency** has been released by the radiation protection authorities of the federal government. For more details, please refer to ORF (TV, Radio Ö3 and www.orf.at) and the website www.notfallschutz.gv.at.

Potassium iodide tablets:

- Have been administered in schools on the instruction of the radiation protection authorities
- Were given to pupils to take home with them, to be taken only upon the express instruction of the radiation protection authorities
- There is no declaration of consent on file for the administration of potassium iodide tablets. Potassium iodide tablets for children and adolescents may be obtained from pharmacies free of charge.

The radiation protection authorities will provide information on how to proceed and on any necessary safety precautions.

With kind regards, The school management

Information about the potassium iodide tablets (taken from the information leaflet)

Potassium iodide tablets should not be taken if:

- your child has an **overactive thyroid**
- your child has **benign lumps or nodules in the thyroid gland** that are not being treated. If your child has untreated “hot thyroid nodules”, there is a risk of a massive overproduction of thyroid hormones, which in the worst case can lead to life-threatening cardiovascular reactions.
- if your child is **allergic** (hypersensitive) to iodine. This is very rare and should not be confused with the more common allergy to contrast agents (used to improve the visibility of different organs in imaging procedures such as X-ray examinations).
- if your child is **allergic** to any of the other ingredients of the tablets (maize starch, lactose monohydrate, microcrystalline cellulose, basic butyl methacrylate copolymer, magnesium stearate).
- if your child has **dermatitis herpetiformis**, also known as **Duhring’s disease** (a disease whose symptoms include blisters, reddening of the skin, rashes, wheals and severe burning itching, most commonly on the elbows or knees).
- if your child has allergy-related **inflammation of the blood vessel walls** (hypocomplementemic vasculitis).

Take special care with potassium iodide tablets if:

- it is suspected that your child has a **malignant thyroid tumour**. Thyroid tumours are treated with radioactive iodine. If potassium iodide is taken in large quantities, this can make it impossible to treat the tumour.
- your child has a disease affecting the **trachea**. Giving large quantities of iodine can lead to enlargement of the thyroid gland, which worsens any existing narrowing of the trachea.
- if your child is being treated with **thyroid inhibitors (thyrostatics)**. Please ask your doctor if your child can take potassium iodide tablets.

Taking potassium iodide tablets with other medicines

- **The efficacy of potassium iodide tablets is affected by:** medicines that affect thyroid metabolism (e.g. perchlorate, thiocyanate in concentrations above 5 mg/dl). They inhibit the absorption of iodine by the thyroid gland.
- **Potassium iodide tablets affect the efficacy of:** thyroid inhibitors (thyrostatics).

Potassium iodide G.L. contains lactose. Please ask your doctor if your child can take potassium iodide tablets if you know that your child suffers from a sugar intolerance.

What are the possible side effects?

Like all medicines, potassium iodide tablets can cause side effects, although not everyone will experience them.

The following side effects have been observed:

Rare (may affect up to 1 in 1,000 people):

- An unknown iodine allergy may appear for the first time. Allergy symptoms may occur, such as reddening of the skin, itchy and burning eyes, a runny nose, a dry cough, diarrhoea, headaches and similar complaints. Life-threatening reactions are possible, especially if your child has dermatitis herpetiformis, also known as Duhring’s disease (a disease whose symptoms include blisters and reddening of the skin, most commonly on the elbows or knees) – see above: “Potassium iodide tablets should not be taken if:”.
- Inflammation of the blood vessels (e.g. periarteritis nodosa)

Very rare (may affect up to 1 in 10,000 people):

- Iodine-induced hyperthyroidism or hypothyroidism. Symptoms of hyperthyroidism (an overactive thyroid gland) may include an accelerated pulse, excessive sweating, insomnia, tremors, diarrhoea and weight loss despite an increased appetite. If your child experiences these symptoms, please consult a doctor.

Not known (frequency cannot be estimated from the available data):

- Irritation of the stomach lining may occur, especially if the potassium iodide tablets are taken on an empty stomach.
- Inflammation of the salivary glands
- Gastrointestinal complaints
- Mild skin rashes

As a general rule:

Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you need any further information or advice.