

## Patient information factsheet

# Caring for or comforting a relative or friend during a nuclear medicine diagnostic 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 diagnostic 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 the nuclear medicine diagnostic procedure, your relative or friend will receive a small amount of ionising radiation and will become temporarily radioactive. As you are providing care and/or comfort to your relative or friend, you will also be exposed to a small amount of radiation. The amount of radiation you are exposed to will depend on:

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

The amount of radiation most carers and comforters are exposed to is similar to the amount you would be exposed to if you were to go on a return flight from the UK to Australia.

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?

If you are providing physical support to your relative or friend, please make sure that you do not move while the images are being taken. Moving during this time may result in the images needing to be re-taken.

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.

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