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 SEARCH

- [NCI Home](#)
- [Cancer Topics](#)
- [Clinical Trials](#)
- [Cancer Statistics](#)
- [Research & Funding](#)
- [News](#)
- [About NCI](#)

Get the Facts About Exposure to I-131 Radiation



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Exposure to I-131 Radiation
Introduction
How Americans Were Exposed to I-131
The Search for Answers
I-131's Rapid Breakdown
The Milk Connection
About Thyroid Disease
Thyroid and I-131
Who's at Risk?
How Do Doctors Diagnose and Treat Thyroid Cancer?
Key Facts
Taking Care of Yourself
Page Options
Print This Page Print This Document View Entire Document Email This Document View/Print PDF Order Free Copy Bookmark & Share

The Milk Connection

People younger than 15 at the time of aboveground testing (between 1951 and 1963) who drank milk, and who lived in the Mountain West, Midwestern, Eastern, and Northeastern United States, probably have a higher thyroid cancer risk from exposure to I-131 in fallout than other people. Their thyroid glands were still developing during the testing period. And they were more likely to have consumed milk contaminated with I-131. The amount of I-131 people absorbed depends on:



- Their age during the testing period (between 1951 and 1963)
- The amount and source of milk they drank in those years
- Where they lived during the testing period

Age and residence during the Cold War years are usually known. But few people can recall the exact amounts or sources of the milk they drank as children. While the amount of milk consumed is important in determining exposure to I-131, it is also important to know the source of the milk. Fresh milk from backyard or farm cows and goats usually contained more I-131 than store-bought milk. This is because processing and shipping milk allowed more time for the I-131 to break down.

[< Previous Section](#) | [Next Section >](#)

Quick Links

- [Director's Page](#)
- [Dictionary of Cancer Terms](#)
- [NCI Drug Dictionary](#)
- [Funding Opportunities](#)
- [NCI Publications](#)
- [Advisory Boards and Groups](#)
- [Science Serving People](#)
- [Español](#)

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[Update](#)
[The Nation's Investment in](#)
[Cancer Research FY 2011](#)

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