



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Health

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STATE HEALTH COMMISSIONER

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Dear Colleague,

With great sadness, each one of us has followed the terrible human tragedy in the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan. Our thoughts and prayers are with our Japanese colleagues who are tirelessly working on providing health care to their devastated communities in this very difficult time. Specific to radiation exposure and radiation safety concerns, VDH has received updated information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in the last few days. I would like to share with you informational updates in four specific areas:

1. Screening procedures for elevated radiation levels for individuals returning from Japan
2. Travel guidance for humanitarian volunteers
3. Screening procedures for food products from Japan
4. Environmental monitoring/Potassium Iodide

Screening procedures

Late yesterday, the CDC released interim recommendations for evaluation of passengers from Japan (see attached recommendations). All travelers entering the United States through international airports, including those from Japan, are monitored for radioactive contamination by CBP personnel. The screening with portable personal radiation detection devices has always been in place and remains in place now. If there is an alert, that individual is taken aside to determine the source of the radiation indication. CBP staff will follow the agreed upon protocol and, if necessary, will provide individuals with a travelers health alert notice providing additional guidance. Contact information will be collected for follow up by CDC, if warranted.

Should you receive a call from a patient who traveled from Japan and was identified as potentially contaminated, please call VDH's Division of Radiologic Health at **(804) 864-8150** for further guidance.

Travel Guidance

Many questions may arise from patients returning from Japan or those traveling to Japan for business or as a volunteer in the humanitarian relief effort. CDC has created a resource website, <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/content/id/2511.aspx>, which includes numerous guidance and

information documents specifically for clinicians. The website also includes a Japan travel health precaution which we recommend you use for reference as you advise your patients. This guidance is likely to change, so please check the website frequently.

Food Screening

Your patients may also ask about the safety of the foods they eat given the reports of contaminated foods in Japan. The FDA has augmented the radiation screening of shipments from Japan and will continue to assure the safety of foods entering the country.

(<http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/PublicHealthFocus/ucm247403.htm>)

Environmental Monitoring/Potassium Iodide

Environmental radiation monitoring is performed by EPA and reveals no evidence of concerning levels of radiation in the United States (<http://www.epa.gov/japan2011/>). Therefore we continue to recommend, as does the CDC, that there is no reason for individuals in the US to purchase or take potassium iodide (KI). Additional information about KI is available at

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/radiation/ki.asp#med>

VDH continues to monitor the radiation accident situation and will share any additional information relative to your practice and public health as it becomes available. Another timely source of information is the federal government website www.usa.gov which provides ongoing updates from all involved federal agencies.

Thank you for your partnership.

Sincerely,

Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP
State Health Commissioner