



UK Health  
Security  
Agency

# What to do if there is a radiation emergency



**Easy read booklet**

# What is in this booklet

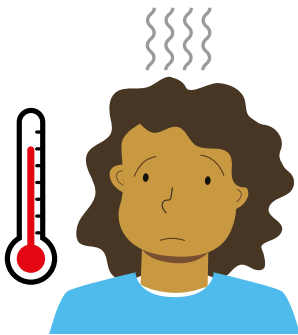
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# Who this guidance is for

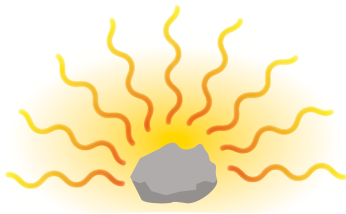


This guidance is for everybody.

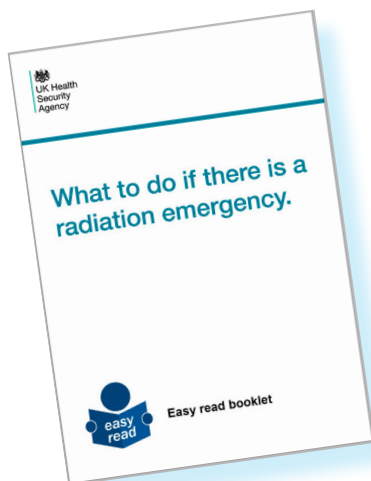
It tells you what to do if there is an emergency where radiation is released.



Radiation is a type of energy which can make you ill.



Radiation is released by radioactive material.



If there is an emergency where radiation is released, follow this guidance as much as you can.

This will help to stop you getting ill from the radiation.

# Important things to know and do

If there is a radiation emergency, there are 3 important things you should do straight away:

## Go inside



Go indoors and stay there.

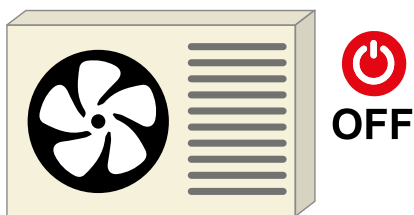
Close the windows and doors to the outside.



Try to stay away from the outside walls.

## Stay inside

Staying inside protects you from radiation.



Turn off fans and air conditioning if you have them.

You will be told what to do next.



You might need to stay inside for 1 or 2 days.

# Important things to know and do

## Tune in

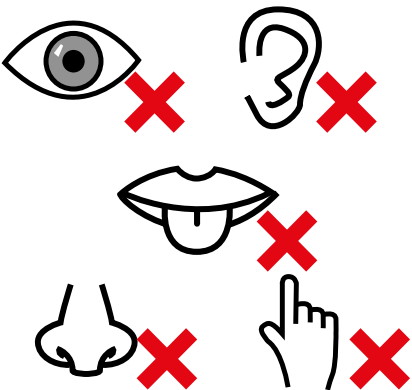


Check the news to find out what to do next.

Official advice might be given on the radio, television, internet, social media or by the police.

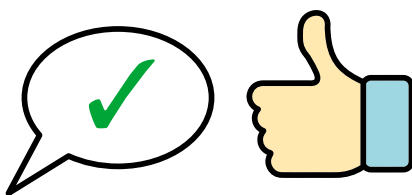
The government will put advice online at GOV.UK.

## Follow the advice for where you are



What you need to do depends on where you are and where the radiation emergency is.

You cannot see, hear, taste, smell or feel radiation.



You need to follow the advice even if you cannot tell that anything has happened.

If you are not in the UK, follow the advice for where you are.

# Important things to know and do



The emergency services might tell you to leave the place where you are staying.

This is called evacuation.

Get ready to leave in case you are told to.



Only leave if you are told to. Going outside might mean your body gets more radiation.



If a radiation emergency happens outside the UK, and you are in the UK at the time, you probably do not need to do anything different to normal.



If you need to do anything different, you will be told.

Check for official advice on the radio, television, internet or social media.

# What a radiation emergency is



When something happens that means that people might be exposed to high levels of radiation, this is called a radiation emergency.



Radiation emergencies could be an accident at a nuclear power station, or an accident when radioactive material is being taken from one place to another.



Radiation emergencies do not happen very often.

There are plans for what to do if there is a radiation emergency.



HM Government

The UK government, councils and the people who look after nuclear facilities have made these plans.

# What radioactive material is

In a radiation emergency, radioactive material can get into the air and onto things outside.

The radiation can get into your body:

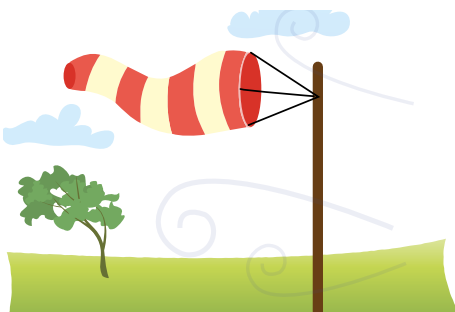


- by breathing in radioactive material
- through your skin and clothes
- by eating and drinking food and drink that have radioactive material in them



You are most likely to be affected if you are close to the radiation emergency.

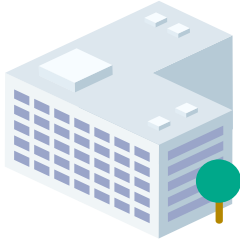
But radioactive material can also travel because of the wind, so people further away can be affected too.



Get local advice about where is affected and what to do.



# Going inside



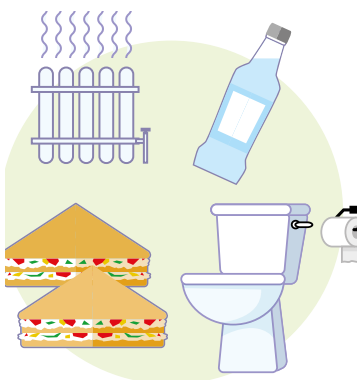
If there is an emergency involving radiation, go into a building as soon as you can.



If you are already in a building, stay there.

Go into the nearest building if you are not at home. Do not travel home.

Buildings made from stone, brick or concrete are best. Any building is better than being outside.



If you can, go into a building with heating, water, food and a toilet.



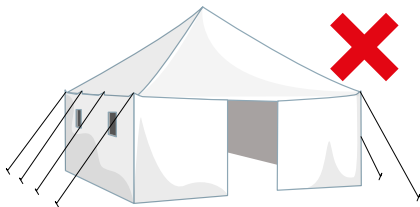
If you have been told to clean yourself, do this as soon as you can.

# Going inside

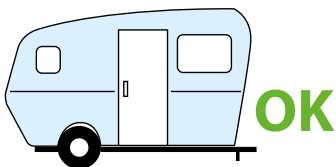


Close the doors and windows to outside. This will stop you breathing in as much radiation.

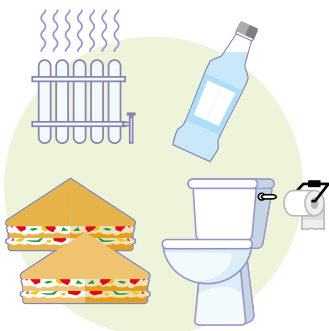
Stay away from windows, doors and walls to outside if you can. This will mean less radiation from outside will get to your body.



Vehicles and tents are not good at protecting you from radiation.



Temporary buildings and caravans are not as good as brick buildings but are better than being outside. They can be used if there is heating, water, food and a toilet.



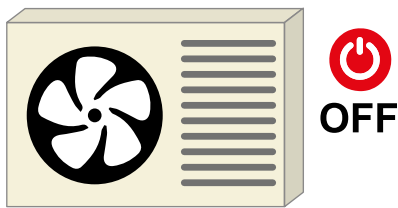
# Staying inside

You will need to stay inside while it is dangerous to be outside.



You might need to stay inside for 1 or 2 days.

Sometimes you might need to stay inside for longer.



Turn off anything that brings air inside, like fans or air conditioning. This will stop as much radioactive material coming inside.



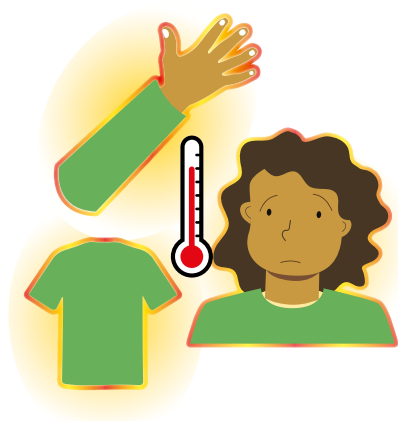
If you take medicine regularly, phone NHS 111 or go to NHS 111 online to find out what to do. Do not go outside to get medicines.

Do not go outside even if your family and loved ones are somewhere else. They will be told what to do where they are.



Check the news and GOV.UK to find out when it is safe to go outside.

# Removing radioactive material from your skin and clothes (decontamination)



If you were outside when the radiation emergency happened, your skin, clothes and hair might have radioactive material on them.

Removing radioactive material from your skin, clothes and hair can help protect you.

Taking your clothes off can remove most of the radioactive material.



Use soap or shampoo to clean yourself.



Do not use conditioner on your hair as this can make radioactive material stick to your hair.



Follow the instructions in a separate factsheet on how to carefully clean yourself to remove radioactive material.

# Pets



If you were with your pet when you were told to go inside, take them inside with you.



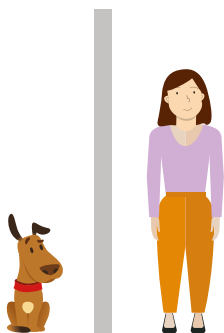
Do not go outside to find your pet. This could harm you.



If your pet has been outside, carefully clean them with soap and water.

Do this as soon as you can.

Do not have contact with your pet before you have carefully cleaned them.



If you cannot clean your pet, put them somewhere separate to people, for example in another room in the building.

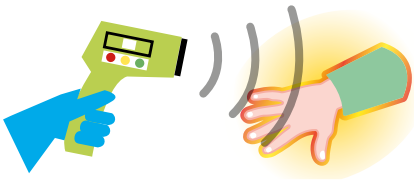
Do not let your pet go outside again until you are told that it is safe.

# Leaving the place that you have been staying (evacuation)



You might be told to leave the place where you have been staying and travel somewhere else.

You will be told what to do and where to go. You could get this information on the radio, television, internet or social media.



After you leave, you might need to be checked for radioactive material.



You might also need to carefully wash yourself (decontaminate).



You might need to do this before going into the place where you will be staying next.

Do not leave the place you have been staying unless you are told to. This could harm you.

Do not go back to the place that you left until you are told it is safe.

# Stable iodine



If the radiation emergency involves a nuclear reactor, radioactive iodine might be released. Radioactive iodine can get into your body.



If you take a medicine called stable iodine at the right time, this helps to stop the radioactive iodine from getting into your body.

Stable iodine only works against radioactive iodine. It does not protect you against other sorts of radiation.

If you need stable iodine tablets, you will be told when to take them and how much to take.



Do not start taking stable iodine more than 24 hours after the radiation emergency. This might do more harm than good.

Read the information leaflet with the tablets before you take them.



Do not take other sorts of iodine. It will not help you, and it might make you ill.

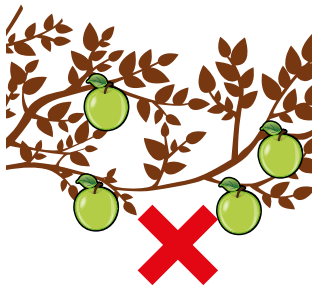
# Food and drink



Food and drink that was already inside when the emergency happened is safe to eat or drink.

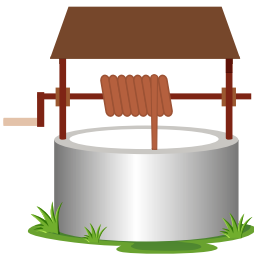


Water from the taps will usually be safe to drink. You will be told if you cannot drink tap water.



Food and water from outside might not be safe.

You will be told if there is food you cannot eat.



You will also be told whether you can use water from other places, like wells.



# Radiation emergencies not in the UK



If you are in a country that is not the UK, and a radiation emergency happens in that country, follow instructions from local emergency services.

Get in touch with the local British Embassy, Consulate or High Commission when you can.

# Getting information during the emergency



Check the news to find out what to do.

Go to [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) online to find out what to do.

The advice on what you have to do might change, so keep checking what you need to do.

# More information

Visit these websites for more information:

[Nuclear emergencies: information for the public](#)

[Preparing for and responding to energy emergencies](#)

[Radiation emergencies: public health protection 2019](#)

[Office for nuclear regulation – regulated sites](#)

[Foreign travel advice](#)

[Food Standards Agency](#)

[Radioactive incident monitoring](#)

[Environment Agency](#)

[Natural Resources Wales](#)

[Northern Ireland Environment Agency](#)

[Scottish Environment Protection Agency](#)

[World Health Organization – radiation emergencies](#)