

Children near Fukushima disaster more likely to get cancer, study says

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A young evacuee is screened at a shelter for leaked radiation from the tsunami-ravaged Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant in Fukushima, Japan, March 24, 2011. Photo: AP Photo/Wally Santana

TOKYO, Japan — A big wave hit a nuclear power plant in the country of Japan in 2011. A power plant is a building that makes electricity. The plant was destroyed. Radiation was sent into the air and soil.

Radiation is very dangerous and can make people really sick.

About 370,000 children lived in Fukushima. That is the city where the power plant is located. A new study looked at how many of the children have become sick. It found that the children are more likely to have thyroid cancer than other children.

In fact, they are 20 to 50 times more likely. Cancer can affect any part of the body. In thyroid cancer, cells in the thyroid do not grow normally. The thyroid is in the neck.

Too Many Fukushima Children Have Cancer

Thyroid cancer is caused by radiation. It can be treated. People rarely die from it. However, the cancer patients have to take medicine for the rest of their lives.

Shunichi Yamashita is a Japanese doctor. Right after the disaster, the government sent him to Fukushima. Yamashita said the radiation would not cause cancer.

Then the government gave most of the children checkups. At least 137 children may have thyroid cancer, the study said. A year ago, that number was 112. Only 1 or 2 of every million children get thyroid cancer every year.

Toshihide Tsuda is a scientist in charge of the study. Too many children have thyroid cancer, he said. Tsuda teaches at Okayama University in Japan.

Did Radiation Cause Cancer In Children?

Scientists do not agree if the study is correct.

Scott Davis teaches at the School of Public Health in Seattle, Washington. He found a problem in the study. No one knows how much radiation each child got. Davis does not think more children have cancer.

David J. Brenner disagrees. He teaches at Columbia University Medical Center in New York City. He said that radiation caused the cancer.

People cannot live within 12 miles of the Fukushima nuclear plant. Workers are trying to clean up the area. Even people in safe areas have left. They worry about sickness. They worry especially for their children.

Noriko Matsumoto left the area and went to Tokyo, the capital of Japan, with her daughter. The girl was 11 years old at the time. At first, Matsumoto did not worry about the radiation. Then her daughter started getting nosebleeds and skin problems.

Matsumoto thinks that the radiation caused her daughter's sickness.

Quiz

1 Which paragraph in the section "Did Radiation Cause Cancer In Children?" explains why some scientists aren't sure if the study is correct?

2 Based on the article, how many children may have thyroid cancer in Fukushima?

(A) 137

(B) 20

(C) 50

(D) 112

3 Read the sentence from the section "Too Many Fukushima Children Have Cancer."

*Thyroid cancer is caused by radiation. It can be treated.
People rarely die from it.*

What is the BEST definition of "rarely" as used in the sentence?

(A) something that does not often happen

(B) something that is unique

(C) something that usually happens

(D) something that is only partly complete

4 Read the sentence from the introduction [paragraphs 1-4].

Radiation is very dangerous and can make people really sick.

Which of the following would BEST replace the word "dangerous" in the sentence without changing the meaning of the sentence?

(A) harmful

(B) difficult

(C) common

(D) unusual