

Lifespan of radioactive material

Radioactive materials are measured in half-lives, or the time it takes for radiation to fall by 50% through natural decay. While the passage of time sharply reduces radiation from some isotopes, others stay radioactive almost indefinitely

Iodine 131: 8 days. Produced by fission of uranium atoms. Blamed for high incidence of thyroid cancer among children exposed to fallout from 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster

Ruthenium 103: 39 days

Ruthenium 106: One year

Strontium 90: 30 years

Caesium 134: Two years / Caesium 137: 30 years.

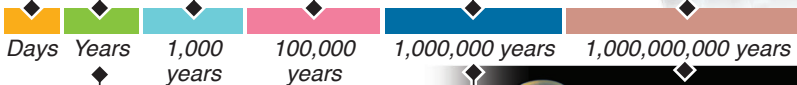
Absorbed in food and water or inhaled as dust, caesium spreads into soft body tissue, muscle and bone, boosting risk of cancer

Plutonium 239: 24,100 years. Soil samples detected around Fukushima plant are similar to those found at locations polluted by atmospheric nuclear tests, Japan says

Uranium 234: 247,000 years

Uranium 235: 710m years

Uranium 238: 4.5bn years



30 years ago: Start of home-computer age

20,000 years ago: Maximum extent of ice during last glacial period

250,000 years ago: Neanderthals appear

600 million years ago: Soft-bodied multicellular organisms appear

4.5 billion years ago: Formation of Solar System

