

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Etanercept and infliximab for the treatment of psoriatic arthritis

NICE 'technology appraisal guidance' advises on when and how drugs and other treatments should be used in the NHS.

This leaflet is about when etanercept and infliximab should be used to treat people with psoriatic arthritis in the NHS in England and Wales. It explains guidance (advice) from NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence). It is written for people with psoriatic arthritis but it may also be useful for their families or carers or anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe psoriatic arthritis or the treatments in detail – a member of your healthcare team should discuss these with you. Some sources of further information and support are on the back page.



What has NICE said about etanercept and infliximab?

Etanercept should be offered as an option for treating adults with psoriatic arthritis when:

- the person has arthritis with three or more tender joints and three or more swollen joints
- at least two other disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs), given on their own or together, haven't worked.

Infliximab should be offered as an option for treating adults with psoriatic arthritis if:

- the person meets the criteria in the two bullets above, and
- etanercept causes a reaction which means that the person shouldn't continue taking it, or
- the person has a condition or is taking another medicine that means they should not take etanercept, or
- the person has major difficulty injecting themselves.

If the person's psoriatic arthritis has not shown a measured response at 12 weeks, their treatment with etanercept or infliximab should be stopped.

Psoriatic arthritis

Psoriatic arthritis is inflammation of the joints in people who have psoriasis.

Psoriasis is a skin disease in which the normal processes of skin cell replacement are speeded up. Under normal circumstances new skin cells rise to the surface of the skin, and the dead ones at the surface drop off. In people with psoriasis this happens so quickly that the new skin cells get to the surface before the old ones have died and dropped off. This causes raised red patches of skin covered with silvery scales which are known as 'plaques'. In people with psoriatic arthritis these plaques are associated with tender, swollen or painful joints.

Psoriatic arthritis does get worse over time, but it can be unpredictable with symptoms ranging from mild to severe.

Etanercept and infliximab

Etanercept and infliximab are medicines used to treat psoriatic arthritis. Both drugs work to reduce pain and swelling caused by the inflammatory protein TNF-alpha.

What does this mean for me?

When NICE recommends a treatment, the NHS must ensure it is available to those people it could help, normally within 3 months of the guidance being issued. So, if you have severe psoriatic arthritis, and your doctor thinks that etanercept or infliximab is the right treatment for you, you should be able to have the treatment on the NHS. Please see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance if you appear to be eligible for the treatment but it is not available.

These may not be the only possible treatments for psoriatic arthritis. Your healthcare team should talk to you about whether they are suitable for you and about other treatment options available.

More information about psoriatic arthritis

The organisations below can provide more information and support for people with psoriatic arthritis. Please note that NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

- The Psoriasis Association, 08456 760 076,
www.psoriasis-association.org.uk
- Skin Care Campaign,
www.skincarecampaign.org
- Psoriatic Arthropathy Alliance, 0870 7703212,
www.thepaa.org

NHS Direct online (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) may also be a good starting point for finding out more. Your local Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) may also be able to give you further advice and support.

About NICE

NICE produces advice (guidance) for the NHS about preventing, diagnosing and treating different medical conditions. The guidance is written by independent experts including healthcare professionals and people representing patients and carers. They consider all the research on the disease or treatment, talk to people affected by it, and consider the costs involved. Staff working in the NHS are expected to follow this guidance.

To find out more about NICE, its work and how it reaches decisions, see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance

This leaflet and other versions of the guidance aimed at healthcare professionals are available at www.nice.org.uk/TA104

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from the NHS Response Line (phone 0870 1555 455 and quote reference N1093).