

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Docetaxel for the adjuvant treatment of early node-positive breast cancer

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

This leaflet is about when docetaxel should be used to treat women with early node-positive breast cancer 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 women with breast cancer but it may also be useful for their families or carers or anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe breast cancer or the treatments in detail – your specialist should discuss these with you. Some sources of further information and support are on page 3.



What has NICE said about docetaxel?

Docetaxel (given with doxorubicin and cyclophosphamide) is recommended as a possible adjuvant treatment for women with early node-positive breast cancer.

Early node-positive breast cancer

Breast cancer is described as 'early' if the cancer is only in the breast and the lymph nodes under the arm, and has not spread to other parts of the body. 'Node-positive' means that the cancer has been found in these underarm lymph nodes.

This may not be the only possible treatment for breast cancer. Your healthcare team should talk to you about whether it is suitable for you and about other treatment options available.

Docetaxel

Docetaxel (also known as Taxotere) is a taxane, a type of drug (medicine) used for chemotherapy. It works by stopping cancer cells from dividing, which prevents the cancer from growing, and by killing some cancer cells. Docetaxel is given together with two other chemotherapy drugs, doxorubicin and cyclophosphamide, for the adjuvant treatment of breast cancer. Adjuvant treatment is extra treatment that is given after surgery to remove a cancer. Adjuvant treatment aims to kill any remaining cancer cells or stop the cancer from growing back.

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 early node-positive breast cancer, and your specialist thinks that docetaxel (given with doxorubicin and cyclophosphamide) 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.

More information about breast cancer

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

- Breakthrough Breast Cancer, Freephone 08080 100 200
www.breakthrough.org.uk
- Breast Cancer Care, Freephone 0808 800 6000
www.breastcancercare.org.uk
- Cancerbackup, Freephone 0808 800 1234
www.cancerbackup.org.uk

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/TA109

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from the NHS Response Line (phone 0870 1555 455 and quote reference N1102).