

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Bevacizumab and cetuximab for the treatment of metastatic colorectal 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 **bevacizumab** and **cetuximab** should be used to treat people with metastatic colorectal cancer in the NHS in England and Wales. It explains guidance (advice) from NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence). It does not cover using these drugs to treat other types of cancer. It is written for people with metastatic colorectal cancer but it may also be useful for their families or carers or anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe metastatic colorectal cancer 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.

There are several possible treatments for metastatic colorectal cancer. Your healthcare team should talk to you about the treatment options available.

What has NICE said?

Bevacizumab in combination with 5-fluorouracil plus folinic acid, with or without irinotecan, is not recommended for people with metastatic colorectal cancer who have not been treated before.

Cetuximab in combination with irinotecan is not recommended for people with metastatic colorectal cancer who have had previous treatment for the cancer that also included irinotecan.

Consultants should not stop prescribing bevacizumab or cetuximab for people who were already taking it when the guidance was issued. These patients should be able to carry on taking bevacizumab or cetuximab until they and their consultants decide that it is the right time to stop treatment.

Metastatic colorectal cancer

Colorectal cancer is cancer affecting parts of the bowel called the colon or rectum. It is described as metastatic if it has spread from the colon or rectum to other parts of the body.

Bevacizumab and cetuximab

Bevacizumab and cetuximab are two drugs used for people with colorectal cancer.

Bevacizumab (also called Avastin) stops new blood vessels forming in a tumour. It is given with two other drugs – 5-fluorouracil and folinic acid – as a treatment for metastatic colorectal cancer in people who have not been treated before for the disease. Another drug, irinotecan, may be given at the same time.

Cetuximab (also called Erbitux) is a drug that binds to a protein that is found on some cancer cells, stopping the cells from multiplying. It is given with another drug called irinotecan for this type of metastatic colorectal cancer if chemotherapy that included irinotecan has not worked.

What does this mean for me?

NICE looks at how well treatments work and also at how well they work in relation to how much they cost the NHS.

There was evidence that bevacizumab would not represent value for money for the NHS. It was unclear how well cetuximab works compared with existing treatments for metastatic bowel cancer, and there was evidence that it would not represent value for money.

This means that for the time being bevacizumab and cetuximab should not be prescribed routinely on the NHS. Your doctor should talk to you about other treatment options available to you.

If you are already taking bevacizumab or cetuximab for metastatic bowel cancer, you should be able to continue taking it until you and your consultant decide it is the right time to stop.

More information about metastatic bowel cancer

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

- Beating Bowel Cancer, 020 8892 5256
www.beatingbowelcancer.org
- Bowel Cancer UK, 0870 850 6050
www.bowelcanceruk.org.uk
- Cancerbackup, 0808 800 1234
www.cancerbackup.org.uk
- Lynn's Bowel Cancer Campaign, 020 8891 5937
www.bowelcancer.tv
- Tenovus: the cancer charity, 0808 808 1010
www.tenovus.com

NHS Direct online (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) may 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/TA118

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from the NHS Response Line (phone 0870 1555 455 and quote reference N1200).