

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Alteplase for the treatment of acute ischaemic stroke

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

This leaflet is about when **alteplase** should be used to treat people with an acute ischaemic stroke 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 stroke. It is written for people with an acute ischaemic stroke but it may also be useful for their families or carers or anyone with an interest in the condition.

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



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

What has NICE said?

Alteplase is recommended as a possible treatment for people with an acute ischaemic stroke if it is given:

- by a doctor with training and experience in managing acute strokes
- in hospitals with the staff and equipment needed to allow it to be used safely and properly.

Acute ischaemic stroke

A stroke is when the normal blood supply to part of your brain is cut off. This starves the cells of oxygen in the area affected, causing them to become damaged or die.

An ischaemic stroke is a stroke caused by a blood clot blocking an artery in the brain. 'Acute' means that the stroke started suddenly.

Alteplase

Alteplase is a drug that dissolves blood clots. It can help remove the clot that is stopping blood reaching the part of the brain affected by an acute ischaemic stroke. It must be given within 3 hours of the stroke starting.

It is extremely important that alteplase is not used in strokes caused by bleeding in the brain. It needs to be given in hospitals with a brain scanner, so this type of stroke can be ruled out before a person has alteplase.

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 an acute ischaemic stroke, and your doctor thinks that alteplase 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 acute ischaemic stroke

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

- Different Strokes, 0845 130 7172,
www.differentstrokes.co.uk
- South Asian Health Foundation, 07771 933939,
www.sahf.org.uk
- Stroke Association, 0845 3033 100,
www.stroke.org.uk

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/ITA122

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from the NHS Response Line (phone 0870 1555 455 and quote reference N1277).