

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Ezetimibe for the treatment of primary (heterozygous-familial and non-familial) hypercholesterolaemia

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

This leaflet is about when **ezetimibe** should be used to treat people with primary (heterozygous-familial and non-familial) hypercholesterolaemia 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 primary (heterozygous-familial and non-familial) hypercholesterolaemia but it may also be useful for their families or carers or anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe primary hypercholesterolaemia 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.



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

What has NICE said?

Ezetimibe is recommended as a possible treatment for adults with primary (heterozygous-familial and non-familial) hypercholesterolaemia in the following circumstances.

- Ezetimibe can be taken on its own by a person who would normally be given a statin to treat their condition but can't because the person has a condition or takes another medicine that interferes with how the statin works, or because the statin is likely to cause side effects.
- Ezetimibe can be taken at the same time as a person's usual statin rather than changing to a new statin when cholesterol levels are not low enough despite increasing the dose of the statin, or if a person is unable to try higher doses of the statin because it is likely to cause side effects.

When a person has side effects from using a statin, this is described as 'intolerance'. Side effects include muscle pain, severe stomach problems or when tests indicate that the liver is not functioning normally.

A decision on whether a person's cholesterol level is low enough should be based on an individual risk assessment.

If it is decided that a person should take their usual statin and ezetimibe together, then the least expensive form of ezetimibe should be prescribed.

Primary hypercholesterolaemia

Hypercholesterolaemia is a medical term that is used to describe when a person's cholesterol levels are too high. In primary heterozygous-familial hypercholesterolaemia, high cholesterol levels are caused by a faulty gene. Whereas in primary non-familial hypercholesterolaemia, which is more common, a number of genetic factors combine with a person's health, such as poor diet, smoking and lack of exercise, to cause high cholesterol levels.

Ezetimibe

Ezetimibe is a medicine that works by blocking the absorption of cholesterol in the gut. This helps to lower cholesterol levels in the blood.

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 primary (heterozygous-familial or non-familial) hypercholesterolaemia and your doctor thinks that ezetimibe 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

The organisation below can provide more information and support for people with primary (heterozygous-familial or non-familial) hypercholesterolaemia. Please note that NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by this organisation.

- H-E-A-R-T UK – The Cholesterol Charity, 0845 450 5988
www.heartuk.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 guidance (advice) 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/TA132

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from the NHS Response Line (phone 0870 1555 455 and quote reference N1403).