

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Omalizumab for severe persistent allergic asthma

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

This leaflet is about when **omalizumab** should be used to treat people with severe persistent allergic asthma 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 severe persistent allergic asthma but it may also be useful for their families or carers or anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe severe persistent allergic asthma 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 severe persistent allergic asthma. Your healthcare team should talk to you about whether it is suitable for you and about other treatment options available.

What has NICE said?

Omalizumab is recommended as a possible treatment for adults and young people over 12 years with severe persistent allergic asthma when all of the following circumstances apply.

- When the person's asthma is still severe and unstable despite best efforts to control it with other asthma medicines taken as directed by their doctor.
- When the person has stopped smoking, if their doctor feels it is appropriate.
- When the person has allergic asthma. This should be confirmed by checking past symptoms and skin testing for allergies.
- When the person has had at least two asthma attacks within the past year that have needed admission to hospital, or when the person has had three or more severe asthma attacks within the past year, one of which has needed admission to hospital and the other two have needed additional treatment in an accident and emergency department.

Omalizumab treatment should be given along with the person's current asthma medicines. It should be prescribed by a doctor who is experienced in asthma and allergy medicine at a specialist centre.

If omalizumab does not control the asthma after 16 weeks, treatment should be stopped.

Severe persistent allergic asthma

Asthma is a common condition which causes the airways to become narrower. People with asthma have difficulty breathing, wheezing, coughing and feel a tightness in their chest. These symptoms get worse when they have an 'asthma attack'. Allergic asthma is caused by an allergy (for example, an allergy to pollen or dust mites). People with severe persistent allergic asthma have frequent asthma attacks and often wake during the night because of their asthma.

Omalizumab

Omalizumab (also known as Xolair) is a monoclonal antibody drug. Omalizumab is used with other asthma treatments to help reduce the symptoms of allergic asthma.

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 persistent allergic asthma, and your doctor thinks that omalizumab 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 organisations below can provide more information and support for people with severe persistent allergic asthma. Please note that NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

- Action Against Allergy, 020 8892 2711
www.actionagainstallergy.co.uk
- Allergy UK, 01322 619 898
www.allergyuk.org
- Asthma UK, 08457 01 02 03
www.asthma.org.uk
- British Lung Foundation, 08458 50 50 20
www.britishlungfoundation.org

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/TA133

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from the NHS Response Line (phone 0870 1555 455 and quote reference N1405).