

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Febuxostat for hyperuricaemia in people with gout

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

This leaflet is about when **febuxostat** should be used to treat hyperuricaemia in people with gout 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 gout but it may also be useful for their families or carers or anyone with an interest in this condition.

It does not describe hyperuricaemia and gout 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 hyperuricaemia in people who have gout. Your healthcare team should talk to you about the treatment options available.

What has NICE said?

Febuxostat is recommended as a possible treatment for chronic hyperuricaemia in people with gout only if:

- they can't take the medicine allopurinol for medical reasons **or**
- the side effects of allopurinol are so bad that the person either has to stop taking it or can't be given the most effective dose.

People who were already taking febuxostat when the guidance was issued should be able to carry on taking it until they and their healthcare professional(s) decide that it is the right time to stop treatment.

Hyperuricaemia in people with gout

People with hyperuricaemia have too much of a substance called uric acid (also called urate) in their blood. Uric acid is produced when the body breaks down substances known as 'purines' (which are found naturally in the body and also in some foods and certain alcoholic drinks). If the body produces too much uric acid or gets rid of too little, it can build up and tiny crystals can form. Gout occurs when these crystals accumulate in the joints, causing pain, swelling and inflammation. Gout usually affects the joints of the foot (especially the big toe), but can develop in other joints. Crystals may also occur in the kidneys (causing kidney damage) and in the urinary tract (causing stones to develop). Not all people with high levels of urate have gout, and some people have gout but don't have high levels of urate.

Febuxostat

Febuxostat is used to treat chronic hyperuricaemia in adults who develop symptoms of gout that are caused by the build-up of uric acid in their joints or tissues. A chronic condition is one that persists over a long period of time. Febuxostat works to lower the concentration of uric acid in the blood by reducing its formation.

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 hyperuricaemia with gout, you can't take allopurinol for medical reasons or it has severe side effects, and your doctor thinks that febuxostat 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.

You should not normally be offered febuxostat for hyperuricaemia with gout if allopurinol is suitable for you. However, if you have gout and are already taking febuxostat for hyperuricaemia even though you could take allopurinol, you should be able to continue taking febuxostat until you and your healthcare professional decide it is the right time to stop.

More information

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

- Arthritis Care, 0808 800 4050
www.arthritiscare.org.uk
- The UK Gout Society, info@ukgoutsociety.org
www.ukgoutsociety.org

NHS Choices (www.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/TA164

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from NICE publications (phone 0845 003 7783 or email publications@nice.org.uk and quote reference N1756).

We encourage NHS and voluntary sector organisations to use text from this leaflet in their own information about hyperuricaemia in people with gout.