

Accessing NHS care and treatment recommended by NICE

Corporate document

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Contents

Overview	3
Treatments with legal status.....	4
How do I go about getting the right treatment for me?	4
Making a complaint	4
What to do if you still are unable to access the treatment.....	4
Accessing treatments as part of another type of NICE guidance	5
What to do if you think your treatment and care is not following NICE recommendations	5
Additional sources of support	6
Commonly asked questions	7
Can I still get access to a medicine privately if NICE has not recommended it for use in the NHS?	7
How do I get treatment that isn't usually funded on the NHS (an individual funding request)?	7
What is the Cancer Drugs Fund?	7
What is specialised commissioning?	8

This corporate replaces PIP1.

Overview

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) provides national guidance and advice to improve health and social care. We use the best available evidence and input from a variety of sources to decide which treatments and care to recommend. This guide contains advice to help you access treatments and care that NICE has recommended.

Many of our recommendations (especially those about medicines) come with a legal right to help you access that treatment. Other recommendations do not come with this right but there are still ways to try and access a treatment, if you and your health or social care professional think it is the right one for you.

Treatments with legal status

[Technology appraisals](#) and [highly specialised technologies](#) are a special type of guidance about medicines (and occasionally other types of treatments) produced by NICE. If NICE recommends the use of a treatment, the [NHS Constitution](#) says that it is your legal right to have it if your doctor believes it is right for you.

Our website lists all the [treatments that have been considered](#) by NICE which have this legal right attached.

How do I go about getting the right treatment for me?

The first thing to do is to discuss with your healthcare professional, whether the treatment is right for you. If they think it is but you are unable to get it (for example, your local [Clinical Commissioning Group](#) refuses to fund it), you should speak to the [Patient Advice and Liaison Service \(PALS\)](#) at the hospital or community service where you are being treated. If you are being treated at your GP surgery, dental surgery, opticians or community pharmacy service, you will need to speak to [NHS England](#).

Making a complaint

If you still are not able to have the treatment you may want to make a complaint. You should discuss with your healthcare professional how to make a complaint about the organisation not providing the treatment.

The NHS has a [complaints procedure](#), which details each step and provides advice.

You may also find it useful to contact your local council or local [Healthwatch](#) to find out about independent NHS complaints advocacy providers in your area.

What to do if you still are unable to access the treatment

If you have made a complaint and you are still not able to have the treatment you can approach the [Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman](#), with your healthcare professional's support. The Ombudsman is independent of the NHS and government, and can look in to a complaint if you have been unable to resolve it with your local NHS.

Accessing treatments as part of another type of NICE guidance

NICE makes other types of recommendations for the NHS, as well as medicines. These include:

- [Guidelines](#) for specific conditions or illnesses, social care and public health
- [Medical technologies](#) guidance for new medical equipment
- [Diagnostics](#) guidance for new ways of diagnosing illnesses and conditions
- [Interventional procedures](#) guidance for surgical and radiotherapy procedures

You can see a list of all the guidance we have published for these types of treatments and care on [our website](#).

The recommendations in these types of guidance are not a legal right, unlike technology appraisals and highly specialised technologies. But your doctor, or health or care professional, is still expected to consider them.

What to do if you think your treatment and care is not following NICE recommendations

If you think that your care and treatment is not following NICE's recommendations, then you should discuss this with the person providing your care (doctor, nurse, social worker etc). There may be a good medical reason why the recommendation is not suitable for you. If this is the case then you and your health or care professional should discuss what other options are available.

If you are not happy with the reasons given, you should speak to your local [Patient Advice and Liaison Service](#) (PALS) or ask NHS England for advice.

Additional sources of support

National voluntary and community sector organisations (charities) may also be able to offer advice about accessing treatments or making a complaint. Relevant organisations are usually listed in the 'Information for the Public' tab on NICE's guidance webpages.

In addition, you may also find it useful to contact the following:

- [The Citizens Advice Bureau](#) can give you advice and support if you want to complain about the NHS
- [The Public Law Project](#) has a general guide to making a complaint
- [Healthwatch England](#) has a series of guides about the complaints system in your local area.

Commonly asked questions

Can I still get access to a medicine privately if NICE has not recommended it for use in the NHS?

Yes, NICE's remit is only to decide whether medicines can be made available on the NHS. If NICE do not recommend a medicine for use on the NHS a private company can still choose whether to provide a medicine or not.

How do I get treatment that isn't usually funded on the NHS (an individual funding request)?

Sometimes it is possible to access a treatment despite it not being recommended by NICE for use in the NHS. This can happen if the person treating you believes that your circumstances are exceptional and you may benefit from a treatment or service that is not usually offered by the NHS.

Your healthcare professional can make an [individual funding request](#) to NHS England to help you get treatment they think would be suitable for you. NHS England cannot accept individual funding requests directly from patients, although people can work with their health professional to have input.

If you are still unable to get the treatment after trying this option, you and your healthcare professional should discuss what other treatments are available.

NICE has no role in the individual funding request process, so we cannot provide further information about this but NHS England has published a [guide for patients](#).

What is the Cancer Drugs Fund?

Sometimes there is not enough evidence about how well new cancer medicines work. In these situations NICE is unable to recommend that the NHS routinely offers these medicines. When this happens NICE can recommend these drugs can be prescribed through a scheme called the Cancer Drugs Fund. This scheme means that more information about how well the medicines work must be collected. After a few years, once this extra information has been collected NICE will then look again to see if there's enough evidence to recommend it for routine use in the NHS.

You can find out more about the Cancer Drugs Fund on [our website](#).

What is specialised commissioning?

Specialised commissioning is funding to help people access specialist healthcare services. These can involve treatment for rare cancers, genetic disorders or complex conditions. Currently there are 146 specialised services directly commissioned by NHS England.

NICE is currently working with NHS England to help decide which of these specialist [services to commission](#).

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