

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Pemetrexed as a first treatment for non-small-cell lung cancer

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

This leaflet is about when **pemetrexed** should be used as a first treatment for people with non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) 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 pemetrexed to treat other types of cancer. It is written for people with NSCLC but it may also be useful for their families or carers or anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe NSCLC or the treatments in detail – your specialist should discuss these with you. You can get more information from the organisations listed on the back page.

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

What has NICE said?

Pemetrexed is recommended as a possible treatment for locally advanced or metastatic non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) if:

- the cancer is a particular type (adenocarcinoma or large-cell carcinoma) **and**
- the person has not had any treatment for NSCLC before.

Healthcare professionals should not stop prescribing pemetrexed for people who do not have adenocarcinoma or large-cell carcinoma who were already taking it when the guidance was issued. These people should be able to carry on taking pemetrexed until they and their specialist decide that it is the right time to stop treatment.

Non-small-cell lung cancer

Cancer affecting the lungs is grouped into two main types depending on how it looks under the microscope: small-cell lung cancer and non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC). There are three types of NSCLC: squamous cell carcinoma, adenocarcinoma and large-cell carcinoma.

Cancer that is described as being locally advanced or metastatic is cancer that has spread to the surrounding tissues or other parts of the body.

Symptoms of NSCLC include persistent coughing, coughing up blood, shortness of breath, chest pain, tiredness and weight loss.

Pemetrexed

Pemetrexed (also known as Alimta) is an anticancer drug. It works by interfering with an enzyme that cancer cells need to survive and multiply, so pemetrexed stops the cancer from getting bigger and kills some cancer cells.

What does this mean for me?

When NICE recommends a treatment, the NHS must make sure it is available to those people it could help, normally within 3 months of the guidance being issued. So, if you have NSCLC that is adenocarcinoma or large-cell carcinoma, and your doctor thinks that pemetrexed 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 the treatment is not available.

If you are already taking pemetrexed for NSCLC but you do not have adenocarcinoma or large-cell carcinoma, you should be able to continue taking it until you and your specialist decide it is the right time to stop.

More information

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

- Macmillan Cancer Support, 0808 808 2020
www.macmillan.org.uk
- The Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation, 0800 358 7200
www.roycastle.org

NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk) may be a good place to find out more. Your local patient advice and liaison service (usually known as 'PALS') may also be able to give you more information and support. If you live in Wales you should speak to NHS Direct Wales for information on who to contact.

About NICE

NICE produces guidance (advice) for the NHS about preventing, diagnosing and treating medical conditions. The guidance is written by independent experts, including healthcare professionals and people representing patients and carers. They consider the evidence on the disease and treatments, the views of patients and carers and the experiences of doctors, 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/TA181

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from NICE publications (phone 0845 003 7783 or email publications@nice.org.uk and quote reference N1992). The NICE website has a screen reader service called Browsealoud, which allows you to listen to our guidance. Click on the Browsealoud logo on the NICE website to use this service.

We encourage NHS and voluntary organisations to use text from this leaflet in their own information about NSCLC.