

Pemetrexed as maintenance 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 to treat people with non-small-cell lung cancer 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 non-small-cell lung cancer but it may also be useful for their families or carers or for anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe non-small-cell lung cancer or the treatments in detail – a member of your healthcare team 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 option for non-small-cell lung cancer. Your healthcare team should talk to you about whether it is suitable for you and about other options available.

What has NICE said?

NICE recommends pemetrexed as a possible maintenance treatment for some people with non-small-cell lung cancer (see below).

Who can have pemetrexed?

You should be able to have pemetrexed if all the following apply:

- you have locally advanced or metastatic non-small-cell lung cancer
- squamous cell carcinoma is not the main type of cancer you have
- your condition did not worsen immediately after you received platinum-based chemotherapy together with gemcitabine, paclitaxel or docetaxel.

Why has NICE said this?

NICE looks at how well treatments work, and also at how well they work in relation to how much they cost the NHS. NICE applies special considerations to treatments that can extend the lives of people who are nearing the end of their life. NICE recommended pemetrexed because the cost was justified by the benefits it provided when the special considerations were applied.

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. There are three types of non-small-cell lung cancer: 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.

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.

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 non-small-cell lung cancer, and you and your doctor think that pemetrexed is the right treatment for you (see 'What has NICE said?' on page 2), you should be able to have the treatment on the NHS. Please see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance if you think you are eligible for the treatment but it is not available.

More information

The organisations below can provide more information and support for people with non-small-cell lung cancer. NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

- CancerHelp UK (the patient information website of Cancer Research UK), 0808 800 4040, www.cancerhelp.org.uk
- Macmillan Cancer Support, 0808 808 0000, 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 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, nurses and other healthcare professionals, 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/guidance/TA190

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from NICE publications (phone 0845 003 7783 or email publications@nice.org.uk and quote reference N2189). 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 non-small-cell lung cancer.

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