

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Capecitabine as a first treatment for advanced stomach 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 **capecitabine** should be used to treat people with advanced gastric (stomach) cancer that is not suitable for surgery, 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 stomach 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 stomach cancer 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 stomach cancer. Your healthcare team should talk to you about whether it is suitable for you and about other treatment options available.

What has NICE said?

NICE recommends capecitabine, taken with platinum-containing drugs, for some people with stomach cancer (see below).

Who can have capecitabine?

You should be able to have capecitabine if:

- your stomach cancer is advanced **and**
- you have not had treatment for advanced stomach cancer before **and**
- your cancer cannot be removed with an operation.

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 recommended capecitabine because it works as well as other treatments for advanced stomach cancer available on the NHS, and costs less.

Stomach cancer

Cancer can affect any part of the stomach. Symptoms include indigestion (heartburn), loss of appetite, pain and nausea.

Stomach cancer is said to be advanced if it has spread to organs called lymph nodes, which produce white blood cells.

Capecitabine

Capecitabine is taken as a tablet. The body then converts it to another drug called fluorouracil, which causes cancer cells to self destruct.

Capecitabine is taken along with one or more other cancer drugs, one of which will contain platinum (cisplatin or oxaliplatin).

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 advanced stomach cancer, and you and your doctor think that capecitabine 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 advanced stomach cancer. NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

- CancerHelp UK, 0808 800 4040
www.cancerhelp.org.uk
- Macmillan Cancer Support, 0808 808 0000
www.macmillan.org.uk
- Oesophageal Patients Association, 0121 704 9860
www.opa.org.uk
- Rarer Cancers Foundation, 0800 434 6476
www.rarercancers.org.uk

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/TA191

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from NICE publications (phone 0845 003 7783 or email publications@nice.org.uk and quote reference N2237). 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 stomach cancer.