

## Understanding NICE guidance

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Information for people who use NHS services

# Rituximab for first-line maintenance treatment of follicular non-Hodgkin's lymphoma

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

This leaflet is about when **rituximab** should be used as maintenance treatment in people with follicular non-Hodgkin's lymphoma 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 follicular non-Hodgkin's lymphoma but it may also be useful for their families or carers or for anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe follicular non-Hodgkin's lymphoma 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 follicular non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. 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 rituximab as a possible treatment to maintain remission in people with follicular non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

### **Who can have rituximab?**

You should be able to have rituximab maintenance treatment if your follicular non-Hodgkin's lymphoma has already responded to rituximab when given in combination with chemotherapy.

### **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 rituximab maintenance because it is clinically proven to prolong remission and its benefits to patients justifies its cost.

## **Follicular non-Hodgkin's lymphoma**

Lymphoma is cancer of the lymph nodes and lymphatic system, which form part of the body's immune defence against infection. There are two types of lymphoma – Hodgkin's and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Follicular lymphoma is a type of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma that affects a type of white blood cell known as B cells.

## Rituximab

Rituximab is a type of drug known as a monoclonal antibody. It 'recognises' and sticks to B cells, which are then killed by the body's immune system. Rituximab sticks to normal and cancerous B cells and the immune system kills both types. However, once treatment has finished, the body starts to replace its normal 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 follicular non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and you and your doctor think that rituximab maintenance treatment is right for you (see 'What has NICE said?' across the page), you should be able to have the treatment on the NHS. Please see

[www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance](http://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 follicular non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. 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](http://www.cancerhelp.org.uk)
- Leukaemia CARE, 0808 801 0444  
[www.leukaemiacare.org.uk](http://www.leukaemiacare.org.uk)
- Lymphoma Association, 0808 808 5555  
[www.lymphomas.org.uk](http://www.lymphomas.org.uk)

NHS Choices ([www.nhs.uk](http://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](http://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/TA226](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/TA226)*

*You can order printed copies of this leaflet from NICE publications (phone 0845 003 7783 or email [publications@nice.org.uk](mailto:publications@nice.org.uk) and quote reference N2582). 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 follicular non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.*