

## **Understanding NICE guidance**

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Information for people who use NHS services

# **Erlotinib for maintenance treatment of 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 **erlotinib** should be used as maintenance treatment for 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 – your specialist should discuss these with you. You can get more information from the organisations listed on the back page.



*There are several possible treatments for non-small-cell lung cancer. Your healthcare team should talk to you about the treatment options available.*

### **What has NICE said?**

NICE does not recommend erlotinib as maintenance treatment after chemotherapy that contains platinum for people with locally advanced or metastatic non-small-cell lung cancer. Maintenance treatment is sometimes used by people whose cancer did not worsen immediately after having chemotherapy (which is also known as stable disease).

### **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 if they meet certain criteria. It was not certain whether erlotinib provides enough benefit to patients to justify its high cost and it did not qualify for special consideration, so NICE did not recommend it.

## **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. Symptoms of non-small-cell lung cancer include persistent coughing, coughing up blood, shortness of breath, chest pain, tiredness and weight loss. Cancer that is locally advanced or metastatic has spread to the surrounding tissues or other parts of the body.

## Erlotinib

Erlotinib is an anticancer drug. It works by attaching itself to an enzyme involved in cancer cell growth and stops the cancer from growing.

### What does this mean for me?

Erlotinib should not normally be prescribed on the NHS for maintenance treatment of non-small-cell lung cancer. Your doctor should talk to you about other treatment options available to you.

NICE will decide whether to review this guidance in April 2013.

If you are already taking maintenance treatment with erlotinib for non-small-cell lung cancer, 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 non-small-cell lung cancer. NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

- British Lung Foundation, 0845 850 5020  
[www.lunguk.org](http://www.lunguk.org)
- CancerHelp UK – the patient information website of Cancer Research UK, 0808 800 4040  
[www.cancerhelp.org.uk](http://www.cancerhelp.org.uk)
- Macmillan Cancer Support, 0808 808 0000  
[www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)
- The Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation, 0800 358 7200  
[www.roycastle.org](http://www.roycastle.org)

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/TA227](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/TA227)

*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 N2598). 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.*