

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Natalizumab for the treatment of adults with highly active relapsing–remitting multiple sclerosis

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

This leaflet is about when **natalizumab** should be used to treat people with highly active relapsing–remitting multiple sclerosis 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 multiple sclerosis but it may also be useful for their families or carers or anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe multiple sclerosis or the treatments in detail – a member of your healthcare team should discuss these with you. Some sources of further information and support are on the back page.

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

What has NICE said?

Natalizumab is recommended as a possible treatment for people with rapidly evolving severe relapsing–remitting multiple sclerosis.

Healthcare professionals should not stop prescribing natalizumab for people with other types of multiple sclerosis who were already taking it when the guidance was issued. These people should be able to carry on taking natalizumab until they and their doctor decide that it is the right time to stop.

Rapidly evolving severe relapsing–remitting multiple sclerosis

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a disease in which areas of the brain and spinal cord become damaged by the body's own immune system.

Relapsing–remitting MS (RRMS) is a type of MS in which people have flare-ups of symptoms (relapses) followed by a period of recovery (remission). Rapidly evolving severe RRMS is a form of highly active RRMS in which people have two or more relapses that cause disability in a year. In addition, they have specific signs of nerve damage (called lesions) on a MRI (brain) scan:

- one or more of a type of lesion called 'gadolinium-enhancing' or
- a significant increase in a type of lesion called 'T2' compared with an earlier scan.

Natalizumab

Natalizumab (Tysabri) is a drug that is used to treat MS. It is believed to prevent immune cells from leaving the bloodstream, stopping them from reaching areas of inflammation such as MS lesions in the brain and spinal cord. This helps limit further damage, so that relapses occur less often and the disability caused by MS gets worse more slowly.

What does this mean for me?

When NICE recommends a treatment, the NHS must ensure it is available to those people it could help, normally within 3 months of the guidance being issued. So, if you have rapidly evolving severe relapsing–remitting multiple sclerosis, and your doctor thinks that natalizumab 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 you appear to be eligible for the treatment but it is not available.

If you are already taking natalizumab for other types of multiple sclerosis, you should be able to continue taking it until you and your doctor decide it is the right time to stop.

More information

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

- Multiple Sclerosis Society, 020 8438 0700
www.mssociety.org.uk
- MS Trust, 01462 476700
www.mstrust.org.uk

NHS Direct online (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) may be a good starting point for finding out more. Your local Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) may also be able to give you further advice and support.

About NICE

NICE produces guidance (advice) for the NHS about preventing, diagnosing and treating different medical conditions. The guidance is written by independent experts including healthcare professionals and people representing patients and carers. They consider all the research on the disease or treatment, talk to people affected by it, 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/TA127

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from the NHS Response Line (phone 0870 1555 455 and quote reference N1325).