

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Pemetrexed for the 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 **pemetrexed** should be used to treat people with non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) 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 NSCLC but it may also be useful for their families or carers or anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe NSCLC or the treatments in detail – your specialist should discuss these with you. Some sources of further information and support are 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?

Pemetrexed is not recommended for people with locally advanced or metastatic non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC).

Healthcare professionals should not stop prescribing pemetrexed for people who were already taking it when the guidance was issued. These patients should be able to carry on taking pemetrexed until they and their specialist decide it is the right time to stop.

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 (NSCLC). There are three types of NSCLC: 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.

Symptoms of NSCLC include persistent coughing, coughing up blood, shortness of breath, chest pain, tiredness and weight loss.

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 and kills some cancer cells.

What does this mean for me?

Pemetrexed was not shown to be more effective than existing treatments for NSCLC and therefore it was not shown to represent value for money. This means that for the time being it should not be prescribed routinely on the NHS. Your doctor should talk to you about other treatment options available to you.

If you are already taking pemetrexed for NSCLC, 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 NSCLC. Please note that 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
- Cancerbackup, 0808 800 1234
www.cancerbackup.org.uk
- Macmillan Cancer Support, 0808 808 2020
www.macmillan.org.uk
- The Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation, 0800 358 7200
www.roycastle.org
- Tenovus: the cancer charity, 0808 808 1010
www.tenovus.com

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/ITA124

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from the NHS Response Line (phone 0870 1555 455 and quote reference N1308).