

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Infliximab for psoriasis

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

This leaflet is about when **infliximab** should be used to treat adults with plaque psoriasis 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 adults with plaque psoriasis but it may also be useful for their families or carers or anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe plaque psoriasis or the treatments in detail – your specialist 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 plaque psoriasis. Your healthcare team should talk to you about whether it is suitable for you and about other treatment options available.

What has NICE said?

Infliximab is recommended as a possible treatment for adults with plaque psoriasis only if:

- their condition is very severe **and**
- their condition has not improved with other treatments such as ciclosporin, methotrexate **or** PUVA (psoralen and long-wave ultraviolet radiation), **or** they have had side effects with these in the past **or** there is a medical reason why they should not be given these treatments.

Infliximab treatment should be continued beyond 10 weeks only if the psoriasis has clearly improved within this time.

The severity of a person's psoriasis before and during treatment should be assessed by considering the redness, thickness and scaliness of the plaques, the area of the body involved, and how the condition affects the person's quality of life.

When assessing a person's psoriasis, healthcare professionals should take into account any disabilities or difficulties in communicating, which might mean that the standard assessments do not provide accurate information about their condition.

Plaque psoriasis

Plaque psoriasis is a skin condition in which a person has raised red patches of skin covered with silvery scales. These can develop on any part of the body, but are usually found on the elbows, knees and scalp. They are often itchy, but can also be sore, burning and painful. Very severe psoriasis is rare. Occasionally there can be serious problems such as fluid loss, infection, problems with body temperature control and heart failure.

Infliximab

Infliximab improves psoriasis by interfering with a substance in the body (TNF alpha) that is involved in the development of inflammation. Infliximab is given by a specialist and is delivered directly into the bloodstream over 2 hours. Repeated doses are given 2 weeks and 6 weeks after starting treatment, and then once every 8 weeks.

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 plaque psoriasis, and your specialist thinks that infliximab 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.

More information

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

- The Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis Alliance, 0870 770 3212, www.papaa.org
- The Psoriasis Association, 0845 676 0076, www.psoriasis-association.org.uk
- Skin Care Campaign, www.skincarecampaign.org

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/ITA134

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from the NHS Response Line (phone 0870 1555 455 and quote reference N1448).