

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Drug-eluting stents for the treatment of coronary artery disease

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

This leaflet is about when **drug-eluting stents** should be used to treat people with coronary artery disease 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 coronary artery disease but it may also be useful for their families or carers or anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe coronary artery disease 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.

These may not be the only possible treatments for coronary artery disease. Your healthcare team should talk to you about whether they are suitable for you and about other treatment options available.

What has NICE said?

Drug-eluting stents are recommended as a possible treatment for people with coronary artery disease only if:

- the artery to be treated is less than 3 mm in diameter or the affected section of the artery is longer than 15 mm, and
- the additional cost of the drug-eluting stents over bare-metal stents is £300 or less.

Coronary artery disease

Coronary artery disease (also called coronary heart disease) happens when a fatty substance builds up in the walls of the arteries, making the space inside narrower. There are several coronary arteries. Any of them can be narrowed in this way, and more than one artery can be affected. The narrowing of the arteries may mean that they are not supplying enough blood to deliver all the oxygen the heart needs to work properly.

People with coronary artery disease may have no symptoms, or may experience chest pain (known as angina).

Drug-eluting stents

Coronary artery stents are tiny wire mesh tubes that are used to widen narrowed arteries during a procedure called balloon angioplasty. Drug-eluting stents are coated in a drug that reduces the likelihood of the artery from becoming narrow again after surgery. Once implanted into the artery, the drug is slowly absorbed into the tissues surrounding the stent.

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 you should be able to have treatment with drug-eluting stents on the NHS if:

- you have a narrowed coronary artery less than 3 mm in diameter, or if the section of the artery to be treated is longer than 15 mm, and
- drug-eluting stents cost no more than £300 more than bare-metal stents, and
- your doctor thinks that drug-eluting stents are the right treatment for you.

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 coronary artery disease. Please note that NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

- Action Heart, 01384 292233
www.actionheart.com
- British Heart Foundation, 08450 708070
www.bhf.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/ITA152

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from NICE publications (phone 0845 003 7783 or email publications@nice.org.uk and quote reference N1637).

We encourage NHS and voluntary sector organisations to use text from this leaflet in their own information about coronary artery disease.