

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Sunitinib for the treatment of gastrointestinal stromal tumours

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

This leaflet is about when **sunitinib** should be used to treat people with gastrointestinal stromal tumours 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 gastrointestinal stromal tumours but it may also be useful for their families or carers or for anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe gastrointestinal stromal tumours or the treatments in detail – a member of your healthcare team should discuss these with you. You can get more information from the organisations listed on the back page.

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

What has NICE said?

Sunitinib is recommended as a possible treatment for people with unresectable or metastatic malignant gastrointestinal stromal tumours if they have already tried imatinib treatment but it has not worked or was not suitable. The manufacturer of sunitinib has agreed to cover the cost of the drug for the first treatment cycle.

Treatment should be supervised by a specialist who is experienced in treating people with gastrointestinal stromal tumours.

Gastrointestinal stromal tumours

Gastrointestinal stromal tumours are found in the digestive system, most commonly in the stomach. Many of these tumours are benign and cause few symptoms. If they become malignant (cancerous) and are confined to one area of the stomach or bowel, they can often be removed surgically. However, some malignant gastrointestinal stromal tumours are unresectable (that is, they cannot be removed by surgery). They may also spread to other parts of the body. If this happens, they are called metastatic tumours.

Sunitinib

Sunitinib is a drug that is used in the treatment of cancer. It works by binding to cancer cells and slowing down the growth of tumours.

What does this mean for me?

When NICE recommends a treatment, the NHS must make sure it is available to those people it could help, normally within 3 months of the guidance being issued. So, if you have gastrointestinal stromal tumours, and your doctor thinks that sunitinib 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 the treatment is not available.

More information

The organisations below can provide more information and support for people with gastrointestinal stromal tumours. NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

- GIST Support UK, 0300 400 0000
www.gistsupport.co.uk
- Rarer Cancers Forum, 01227 738279
www.rarercancers.org.uk
- Sarcoma UK, 01588 674757
www.sarcoma-uk.org

NHS Choices (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, 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/TA179

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from NICE publications (phone 0845 003 7783 or email publications@nice.org.uk and quote reference N1988). 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 unresectable and/or metastatic malignant gastrointestinal stromal tumours.