

Tocilizumab for rheumatoid arthritis

Information for the public

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What has NICE said?

Tocilizumab (RoActemra), taken with a drug called methotrexate, is recommended as a possible treatment for some adults with rheumatoid arthritis if:

- they have tried disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs) and a TNF inhibitor but they have not worked, and they cannot have rituximab for medical reasons or because of a bad reaction, as long as tocilizumab is used in the same way that NICE recommends TNF inhibitors are used in adalimumab, etanercept, infliximab, rituximab and abatacept for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis after the failure of a TNF inhibitor or
- they have tried TNF inhibitors and rituximab but they have not worked.

What does this mean for me?

If you have rheumatoid arthritis, and your doctor thinks that tocilizumab is the right treatment, you should be able to have the treatment on the NHS.

Tocilizumab should be available on the NHS within 3 months of the guidance being issued.

If you are not eligible for treatment as described above, you should be able to continue taking tocilizumab until you and your doctor decide it is the right time to stop.

Why has NICE said this?

NICE looks at how well treatments work in relation to how much they cost compared with other treatments available on the NHS.

NICE recommended tocilizumab because it works well and its cost is justified after other drugs have been tried.

The condition and the treatment

Rheumatoid arthritis is a condition that causes pain, swelling and inflammation in your joints. Symptoms usually come and go, but can sometimes get much worse, and this is known as a 'flare-up'. Over time, the joints become damaged and stop working properly. The damage is caused when the body's immune system, which normally fights infection, goes wrong and starts to attack healthy joints. People with severe active rheumatoid arthritis have a high level of joint inflammation and pain, which affects their ability to carry out everyday tasks.

Tocilizumab is a drug that helps to reduce the pain and swelling caused by rheumatoid arthritis. It may slow down the progression of the condition and help to prevent permanent joint damage.

[NHS Choices](#) may be a good place to find out more.

Sources of advice and support

- [National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society](#), 0800 298 7650
- [Versus Arthritis](#), 0800 520 0520

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Accreditation

