

Denosumab for preventing complications that result from cancer spreading to the bone from solid tumours in adults

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

This document is about when **denosumab** should be used in the NHS in England and Wales to prevent complications that result from cancer spreading to the bone from solid tumours in adults. It explains guidance (advice) from NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence). It is written for people with solid tumours that have spread to the bone but it may also be useful for their families or carers or for anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe complications that result from cancer spreading to the bone or treatments to prevent them in detail – your specialist should discuss these with you. You can get more information from the organisations listed on page 5.

This may not be the only possible treatment for preventing complications that result from cancer spreading to the bone. Your healthcare team should talk to you about whether it is suitable for you and about other treatment options available.

What has NICE said?

Adults with cancer that has spread to the bone from solid tumours except for prostate cancer

NICE recommends denosumab as a possible treatment for preventing complications that result from cancer spreading to the bone from solid tumours, except for prostate cancer, if the person would otherwise be prescribed a type of drug called a bisphosphonate.

Adults with cancer that has spread to the bone from prostate cancer

NICE does not recommend denosumab for preventing complications that result from prostate cancer spreading to the bone.

Why has NICE said this?

NICE looks at how well treatments work, and also at how well they work in relation to how much they cost the NHS.

In people with breast cancer that has spread to the bone NICE recommended denosumab because it works better and, because it works better, is likely to cost the NHS less overall than other treatments available on the NHS.

In people with cancer that has spread to the bone from solid tumours, except breast and prostate cancer, NICE recommended denosumab because it works better than bisphosphonates. Although it also costs more than other treatments, this was justified by the benefits it provided.

In people with prostate cancer that has spread to the bone denosumab does not provide enough benefit to patients to justify its high cost so NICE did not recommend it.

Complications that result from cancer spreading to the bone from solid tumours

A solid tumour is a type of cancer that develops from solid tissues in the body, such as the breast, prostate or lung.

Some can spread (metastasise) to the bone, commonly the spine, pelvis, hip, upper leg bones and the skull. Almost any cancer can spread to the bone, but it is most often cancers of the breast, prostate, lung, bladder, thyroid and kidney.

If someone has cancer that has spread to their bones the bones may be at higher risk of fracturing or breaking and they may experience pain. They may develop spinal cord compression, either from fractures to the spine or from the cancer pressing on nerves in the spine. They may also need radiotherapy or surgery to treat the pain or to prevent fractures or spinal cord compression. These complications (also known as skeletal-related events) may be delayed or prevented with drugs called bisphosphonates to strengthen the bones.

Denosumab

Denosumab (also known as XGEVA) is a type of drug known as a monoclonal antibody, which strengthens bones by slowing the destruction of the bone.

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 cancer that has spread to the bone from a solid tumour other than prostate cancer, and you and your doctor think that denosumab is the right treatment for you (see 'What has NICE said?' on page 2), you should be able to have the treatment on the NHS. Please see [About NICE guidance](#) if you think you are eligible for the treatment but it is not available.

If you are not eligible for treatment as described in 'What has NICE said?' on page 2, you should be able to continue taking denosumab 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 cancer. NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

- Breakthrough Breast Cancer, 08080 100 200, www.breakthrough.org.uk
- Breast Cancer Care, 0808 800 6000, www.breastcancercare.org.uk
- CancerHelp UK (the patient information website of Cancer Research UK), 0808 800 4040, www.cancerhelp.org.uk
- Macmillan Cancer Support, 0808 808 0000, www.macmillan.org.uk
- Prostate Cancer Support Federation, 0845 601 0766, www.prostatecancerfederation.org.uk

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, nurses and other healthcare professionals, 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 [About NICE guidance](#).

This document and other versions of the guidance aimed at healthcare professionals are available on the [NICE website](#).

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 document in their own information about cancer that has spread to the bone.

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence

Level 1A, City Tower, Piccadilly Plaza, Manchester M1 4BT; www.nice.org.uk

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