

Information for the public

Omalizumab for severe persistent allergic asthma

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

This document is about when omalizumab should be used to treat people with severe persistent allergic asthma in the NHS in England and Wales. It explains guidance (advice) from NICE (the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence). It is written for people (or, in the case of children, their parents or carers) with asthma but it may also be useful for their families or carers or for anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe severe persistent allergic asthma 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 page 4.

This may not be the only possible treatment for severe persistent allergic asthma. Your healthcare team should talk to you about whether it is suitable for you and about other treatment options available.

What has NICE said?

NICE recommends omalizumab as possible additional treatment to standard asthma therapy for some people aged 6 years and over with severe persistent allergic asthma (see below).

Who can have omalizumab?

You (or your child) should be able to have omalizumab if you (or your child):

- have been diagnosed with a certain type of allergic asthma, and
- need continuous or frequent treatment with oral corticosteroids (at least 4 courses in the last year).

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. NICE recommended omalizumab because the benefit to patients justifies the cost.

Severe persistent allergic asthma

Asthma is a common condition that causes the airways to become narrower. People with asthma have breathing difficulties, wheezing, coughing and tightness in their chest. These symptoms get worse when they have an 'asthma attack'. Allergic asthma is caused by an allergy (for example, to pollen or dust mites). People with severe persistent allergic asthma have frequent asthma attacks and often wake during the night because of their asthma.

Omalizumab

Omalizumab (also known as Xolair) works by blocking the action of IgE, a substance in the body that causes the symptoms of allergic asthma. It is used with other asthma treatments to help reduce the symptoms of allergic asthma.

What does this mean for me or my child?

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 (or your child) have severe persistent allergic asthma, and you and your doctor think that omalizumab is the right treatment (see 'What has NICE said?' on page 2), you (or your child) should be able to have the treatment on the NHS. Please see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance if you think you (or your child) are eligible for the treatment but it is not available.

If you (or your child) are not eligible for treatment as described in 'What has NICE said' on page 2, you (or your child) should be able to continue taking omalizumab until you and your doctor decide it is the right time to stop.

More information

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

- Action for Sick Children, 0800 074 4519
www.actionforsickchildren.org
- Allergy UK, 01322 619898
www.allergyuk.org
- Asthma UK, 0800 121 6244
www.asthma.org.uk
- British Lung Foundation, 03000 030 555
www.blf.org.uk
- Action Against Allergy, 020 8892 2711
www.actionagainstallergy.co.uk

NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk) may be a good place to find out more. If you live in Wales you should speak to NHS Direct Wales for information on who to contact.

About NICE

NICE provides national guidance and advice to improve health and social care. The guidance is written by independent experts, including healthcare professionals and people representing patients and carers. They consider the evidence on the condition 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 www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance

This document and other versions of the guidance aimed at healthcare professionals are available at www.nice.org.uk/guidance/TA278

The NICE website has a screen reader service called Browsealoud, which allows you to listen to our guidance. Click on [Accessibility](#) at the bottom of the NICE homepage to use this service.

We encourage NHS and voluntary organisations to use text from this document in their own information about severe persistent allergic asthma.

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