

Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Golimumab for rheumatoid arthritis

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

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

It does not describe rheumatoid arthritis or the treatments in detail – a clinician 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 rheumatoid arthritis. 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 golimumab as a possible treatment for some adults with rheumatoid arthritis in the same circumstances as other drugs for the condition (see 'Who can have golimumab?'¹ below). Golimumab for rheumatoid arthritis needs to be given in combination with a drug called methotrexate.

Who can have golimumab?¹

You should be able to have golimumab therapy if:

- you have severe active rheumatoid arthritis as assessed by a rheumatologist on two separate occasions and you have already tried drugs known as 'conventional' disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (or DMARDs for short), including methotrexate, but these drugs haven't worked **or**
- you have severe active rheumatoid arthritis and you have already tried other types of DMARDs, including a DMARD known as a tumour necrosis factor (or TNF for short) inhibitor, but these drugs haven't worked, and you cannot take rituximab therapy for medical reasons or because you had a bad reaction to it.

Your treatment should be carried out by a specialist rheumatology team. After the first 6 months you should be able to keep having golimumab therapy only if it is clearly improving your rheumatoid arthritis. You should have check-ups every 6 months after that to make sure your golimumab therapy is still working.

When assessing your rheumatoid arthritis, healthcare professionals should take into account any disabilities or difficulties in communicating you may have.

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 golimumab (in combination with methotrexate) for adults with severe active rheumatoid arthritis who have already tried 'conventional' DMARDs, including methotrexate, because it works as well as other treatments available on the NHS and costs about the same.

NICE recommended golimumab (in combination with methotrexate) for adults with severe active rheumatoid arthritis who have already tried other DMARDs, including a TNF inhibitor, only if they cannot take rituximab therapy for medical reasons or because they had a bad reaction to it. This is because treatment with golimumab costs more than treatment with rituximab.

¹ The circumstances described in this section are the same circumstances in which NICE recommends adalimumab, etanercept and infliximab (see www.nice.org.uk/guidance/TA130) and adalimumab, etanercept, infliximab, rituximab and abatacept (see www.nice.org.uk/guidance/TA195).

Rheumatoid arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis is a disease in which the body's immune system, which normally fights infection, goes wrong and starts to attack healthy joints. The joints become swollen, stiff and painful, and eventually they can stop working properly. People with 'severe active' rheumatoid arthritis have very swollen and painful joints that can make everyday activities difficult.

Golimumab

People who have rheumatoid arthritis produce too much of a substance called 'TNF-alpha', which is involved in causing inflammation.

Golimumab (also known as Simponi) stops TNF-alpha working in the body, which helps to reduce swelling and joint damage in people with rheumatoid arthritis. When golimumab is used to treat rheumatoid arthritis it needs to be taken in combination with another drug known as methotrexate.

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 rheumatoid arthritis, and you and your doctor think that golimumab (in combination with methotrexate) 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 www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance if you think you are eligible for the treatment but it is not available.

More information

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

- Arthritis Care, 0808 800 4050
www.arthritiscare.org.uk
- National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society, 0800 298 7650
www.nras.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 www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance

This leaflet and other versions of the guidance aimed at healthcare professionals are available at www.nice.org.uk/guidance/TA225

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from NICE publications (phone 0845 003 7783 or email publications@nice.org.uk and quote reference N2584). 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 rheumatoid arthritis.