

Omalizumab for treating severe allergic asthma

WHAT DOES THE GUIDANCE SAY?

Omalizumab is not recommended for listing on the Medication Assistance Fund (MAF) for government subsidy for treating severe allergic asthma.

WHY WAS OMALIZUMAB NOT RECOMMENDED FOR SUBSIDY?

ACE evaluates how well a treatment works in relation to how much it costs compared to other treatments. Omalizumab was not recommended for government subsidy because its benefits for patients do not justify its high cost.

IS THIS TREATMENT RIGHT FOR ME?

There are different types of treatments available for severe allergic asthma. Your doctor may recommend you take omalizumab when other drugs cannot adequately control your condition.

Your doctor should give you clear information, listen to your views and concerns, and talk to you about your treatment options. Your family can also be involved in the discussion if you wish.

Some of the questions you may want to ask your doctor when making decisions about your care are:

- How will the treatment affect my day-to-day activities?
- How well does it work compared to other treatments?
- What are the side effects and risks of treatment, and how likely are they?
- How long will I need to be on the treatment for?
- What happens if the treatment stops working?
- What happens if I do not want to have treatment?

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WHAT IS SEVERE ALLERGIC ASTHMA?

Asthma is a chronic inflammatory condition that affects the airways in the lungs. People with allergic asthma have airways that are extra sensitive to certain allergens such as dust mites, mould or pollen in the environment. When exposed to allergens, the body makes proteins called IgE (immunoglobulin E) antibodies, which may result in an asthma attack with symptoms such as wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness and coughing.

Despite receiving daily asthma medication, some people have severe allergic asthma. They experience frequent or life threatening asthma attacks and symptoms that affect their daily activities. These patients may need add-on medication to reduce the asthma attacks and control the symptoms.

WHAT IS OMALIZUMAB?

You may know omalizumab as Xolair[®], a drug that belongs to a group of medicines called biologics. It acts by binding to IgE antibodies in the blood and blocking their action, thereby reducing the number of asthma attacks.

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ACE is the national health technology assessment agency under the Ministry of Health (Singapore). It publishes guidances on diagnosing, treating, and preventing different medical conditions based on the latest research information available worldwide.

This summary is not, and should not be regarded as, a substitute for professional or medical advice. Please seek the advice of a qualified healthcare professional about any medical condition.

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