

Oral COX-2 inhibitors for treating pain

WHAT DOES THE GUIDANCE SAY?

COX-2 inhibitors that are taken orally (celecoxib capsule and etoricoxib tablet) are recommended for listing on the Standard Drug List (SDL) for government subsidy for treating pain.

WHAT ARE COX-2 INHIBITORS?

COX-2 inhibitors are a type of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) that targets cyclooxygenase-2 (COX-2), an enzyme responsible for inflammation and pain.

They are often prescribed to treat pain caused by conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis and osteoarthritis.

People who are at risk of, or who already have coronary artery disease, such as a past history of heart attack, angina (chest pain due to narrowed heart arteries) or a history of stroke should not use COX-2 inhibitors.

HOW MUCH ORAL COX-2 INHIBITOR CAN I TAKE?

Your doctor may prescribe celecoxib 200 mg capsule either once or twice daily.

Etoricoxib is usually prescribed as a single 60 mg, 90 mg or 120 mg tablet daily.

HOW LONG SHOULD I TAKE IT?

Your doctor will advise you on how long you will need to take celecoxib or etoricoxib.

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WHO CAN HAVE AN ORAL COX-2 INHIBITOR?

People may be prescribed celecoxib or etoricoxib to treat pain due to different conditions such as:

- osteoarthritis
- rheumatoid arthritis
- primary dysmenorrhoea (period pain)
- ankylosing spondylitis
- chronic low back pain
- gouty arthritis
- acute pain, including pain following minor dental procedures

WHY WERE THEY RECOMMENDED FOR SUBSIDY?

ACE evaluates how well a treatment works in relation to how much it costs compared to other treatments. Celecoxib capsule and etoricoxib tablet were recommended because their benefit in relieving pain and improving quality of life for certain patients justifies their cost.

WHAT DOES LISTING ON THE SDL MEAN FOR ME?

Drugs on the Standard Drug List (SDL) represent therapies essential for managing common conditions affecting the majority of patients in Singapore.

They are subsidised at 50% for all Singaporean citizens who are treated in a public healthcare institution. Patients from lower to middle income households may receive a higher subsidy of up to 75%.

Published: 2 September 2019

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.

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