

## Plain English Summary

# Cancer drugs for previously treated advanced gastric cancer

## What does the guidance say?

Nivolumab is recommended for listing on the Medication Assistance Fund (MAF) from 1 September 2022 for government funding in line with certain criteria for adults with unresectable, locally advanced or recurrent gastric or gastroesophageal junction cancer who have had at least two previous treatments, but their condition has continued to worsen.

Pembrolizumab, ramucirumab, regorafenib and trifluridine/tipiracil are not recommended for funding for previously treated gastric cancer.

## What is gastric cancer?

Gastric cancer occurs when cells grow uncontrollably and form a mass (tumour) in the stomach. The cancer can also affect the area where the oesophagus meets the stomach. This is called gastroesophageal junction (GEJ) cancer. Symptoms of gastric or GEJ cancer can include difficulty swallowing, feeling full or bloated after eating, loss of appetite, heartburn, and unexplained weight loss.

Some people with gastric or GEJ cancer can have surgery to remove the tumour from the affected area. If the tumour has spread outside of the stomach and cannot be removed (unresectable), this is known as locally advanced disease. If the cancer comes back after surgery, or after a patient has finished taking treatment, this is known as recurrent disease.

## What is nivolumab?

Nivolumab belongs to a group of medicines called PD-1/PD-L1 checkpoint inhibitors. It is a type of cancer treatment called immunotherapy that helps the immune system find and kill cancer cells.

Doctors will usually prescribe nivolumab for gastric cancer that cannot be removed with surgery and has come back or worsened despite taking at least two other treatments. It is given as a drip into a vein (intravenously).

If nivolumab is suitable for you, your doctor will tell you how much you need to take and how long you need to take it for.

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### Who can have nivolumab?

Adults with advanced gastric or GEJ cancer that cannot be removed with surgery can have nivolumab if:

- The cancer has come back or worsened after at least two previous treatments;
- They have not had treatment with a PD-1/PD-L1 inhibitor before for their condition; and
- Their doctor prescribes nivolumab in line with the recommended dosage.

Your doctor can advise if nivolumab is a suitable treatment for you.

### Why was nivolumab recommended for funding?

ACE evaluates how well a treatment works in relation to how much it costs compared to other treatments. Nivolumab was recommended for funding because its benefit in improving survival for certain patients with advanced gastric cancer justifies its costs.

Pembrolizumab, ramucirumab, regorafenib and trifluridine/tipiracil were not recommended for funding because their benefits do not justify their costs. If you need one of these treatments for gastric cancer, you can speak to a medical social worker to find out if there is other financial assistance available to help with the cost of treatment.

### What does listing on MAF mean for me?

The MAF helps people pay for expensive treatments that are clinically necessary. If your doctor prescribes nivolumab for you, and you meet the MAF criteria, your treatment cost will be subsidised by 40% to 75%.

Nivolumab has also been included on the Cancer Drug List (CDL) and is claimable under MediShield Life. The subsidy class and MediShield Life claim limits are available at [go.gov.sg/moh-cancer-drug-list](http://go.gov.sg/moh-cancer-drug-list).

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 Agency for Care Effectiveness - ACE  Agency for Care Effectiveness (ACE)

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