

## Plain English Summary

# Pembrolizumab for treating renal cell carcinoma after kidney surgery

## What does the guidance say?

Pembrolizumab is not recommended for government subsidy as adjuvant treatment for patients who are at risk of their cancer coming back after they have had surgery to remove parts of the kidney and other areas affected by renal cell carcinoma. It is claimable under MediShield Life.

## Why was it not recommended for subsidy?

ACE evaluates how well a treatment works in relation to how much it costs compared to other treatments. Pembrolizumab was not recommended for government subsidy as an adjuvant treatment for renal cell carcinoma because its benefits do not justify its cost. If you need pembrolizumab for this condition, 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 is renal cell carcinoma?

Renal cell carcinoma is the most common type of kidney cancer. It occurs when cells grow uncontrollably and form a mass (tumour) in the cortex of the kidney. People with renal cell carcinoma may not have any symptoms initially. As the cancer worsens, symptoms can include blood in urine, unexplained weight loss, fatigue and pain around the kidneys.

If you have renal cell carcinoma, your doctor will assess the size of the tumour and whether it has spread from where it first started. The first treatment for renal cell carcinoma is often surgery to remove any tumours. After surgery, patients may need to take other treatments to destroy any remaining cancer cells and reduce the risk of the cancer coming back. This type of treatment given after surgery is known as adjuvant therapy.

## What is pembrolizumab?

Pembrolizumab 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. It is given as a slow drip into a vein (intravenously).

Your doctor will tell you how much you need to have and how long you need to have it for.

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### Is this the right treatment for me?

There are different types of treatments available for renal cell carcinoma. Your doctor may recommend you have pembrolizumab if 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.

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 much does the treatment cost?
- 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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 Agency for Care Effectiveness - ACE

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