

Plain English Summary

Pembrolizumab for treating advanced cervical cancer

What does the guidance say?

Pembrolizumab is not recommended for government subsidy for treating persistent, recurrent, or metastatic cervical cancer. 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 subsidy because its benefits for patients with persistent, recurrent, or metastatic cervical cancer do not justify its cost. If you need pembrolizumab, 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 cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer occurs when cells grow uncontrollably and form a mass (tumour) in the cervix, the lower part of the womb (uterus). Symptoms can include heavy periods, abnormal bleeding in between periods, and pain.

Treatment for cervical cancer depends on how far the cancer has spread in the cervix and if it has spread to other parts of the body (advanced or metastatic disease). For many patients, the cancer can worsen or come back again after treatment, this is known as persistent or recurrent cervical cancer.

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), usually as part of a combination of cancer medicines, for patients with persistent, recurrent, or metastatic cervical cancer.

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Is this the right treatment for me?

There are different types of treatments for cervical cancer. Your doctor may recommend you have pembrolizumab 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.

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

 Agency for Care Effectiveness (ACE)

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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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