

## Plain English Summary

# Treatments for HER2-positive breast cancer

### What does the guidance say?

Pertuzumab, pertuzumab plus trastuzumab fixed-dose subcutaneous injection, trastuzumab emtansine and tucatinib are not recommended for subsidy for HER2-positive breast cancer.

### Why were these treatments not recommended for subsidy?

ACE evaluates how well a treatment works in relation to how much it costs compared to other treatments. Pertuzumab, pertuzumab plus trastuzumab fixed-dose subcutaneous injection, trastuzumab emtansine and tucatinib were not recommended for subsidy because their benefits do not justify their costs. If you need one of these treatments for HER2-positive breast 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 is HER2-positive breast cancer?

Breast cancer occurs when abnormal cells grow uncontrollably in the ducts or lobes of the breast and spread into the surrounding breast tissue. When the cancer spreads to other parts of the body, this is known as advanced or metastatic disease.

The first treatment for breast cancer is often surgery to remove it. Some patients may have drug treatments such as chemotherapy or hormone therapy before surgery to help shrink the cancer and make it easier to remove. This is called neo-adjuvant treatment. After surgery, patients may need to take other treatments to reduce the risk of the breast cancer coming back.

Some breast cancer cells have too much of a protein (receptor) called HER2 (human epidermal growth factor receptor 2) which encourages the cancer cells to divide and grow. This is known as HER2-positive breast cancer. About 1 in 5 people with breast cancer have HER2-positive cancer. Doctors determine which drug treatments are needed depending on whether different receptors are present or not.

### What is tucatinib?

Tucatinib belongs to a group of medicines called tyrosine kinase inhibitors which bind to the HER2 protein found in cancer cells and stop the cancer from growing. It is taken orally in combination with other cancer medicines for patients who have already had treatment for HER2-positive breast cancer, but their cancer has continued to worsen.

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## What are pertuzumab and trastuzumab?

Pertuzumab and trastuzumab belong to a group of medicines called monoclonal antibodies which bind to the HER2 protein found on cancer cells and stop the cancer from growing. They are given as a slow drip into a vein (intravenously) usually in combination with other cancer medicines for patients with early or advanced HER2-positive breast cancer. They can also be given together as an injection.

Trastuzumab emtansine is a combination treatment called an antibody-drug conjugate therapy for HER2-positive breast cancer, which is given as a slow drip into a vein.

## Which treatment is right for me?

There are different types of treatments for HER2-positive breast cancer. Your doctor may recommend you take a drug that is not subsidised 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

 Agency for Care Effectiveness (ACE)

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