

NHS to Fund Ruxolitinib for Vitiligo

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Thousands of people with facial [vitiligo](#) could soon gain access to the first licensed repigmentation treatment on the NHS, after a policy reversal on cost-effectiveness grounds.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has recommended [ruxolitinib](#) (Opzelura, Incyte) for routine use in patients in England aged 12 years and over with non-segmental vitiligo affecting the face.

Vitiligo is a chronic autoimmune condition characterised by depigmented patches caused by progressive melanocyte destruction. It affects around 1 in 100 people in the UK, with approximately 80% of cases classified as non-segmental. The condition typically presents with symmetrical white patches on both sides of the body.

The visible changes can have substantial psychosocial consequences, including social rejection and withdrawal from daily activities. The condition can affect self-esteem, relationships, and careers,

particularly for people in public-facing jobs.

The burden may be greater in people with darker skin tones, in whom depigmentation is more pronounced.

Limited Treatment Options

Around half of cases develop before age 20. Young people may experience disruption to education and friendships, compounded by social media pressures.

Current management includes camouflage creams and off-label topical corticosteroids or calcineurin inhibitors. Many patients proceed to phototherapy, which requires repeated hospital visits and can be disruptive.

First-in-Class Topical JAK Inhibitor

Ruxolitinib is a topical JAK inhibitor. It reduces the activity of enzymes involved in cytokine signalling and inflammation, thereby reducing the immune system's attack on melanocytes. This helps to repair the skin cells so they regain their natural colour.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency licensed the cream in 2023 for non-segmental vitiligo affecting the face and body in patients aged 12 years and over. It was the first treatment specifically approved for repigmentation in this condition.

The decision was based on the results of two phase 3 clinical trials, TRuE-V1 and TRuE-V2, which showed significantly greater facial and total body repigmentation compared with placebo.

In July 2025, NICE initially [declined to recommend the treatment](#), despite its availability in the US and European Union. At the time, the Vitiligo Society said the outcome left many patients “devastated”.

Revised Review Finds Cost Effectiveness

Following a rapid review and an improved commercial arrangement, NICE concluded that ruxolitinib provides sufficient clinical benefit and represents value for money.

In the pivotal trials, patients receiving ruxolitinib were more than four times more likely to achieve facial repigmentation than those using a placebo cream. They were more than six times more likely to report their vitiligo as much less noticeable or no longer noticeable.

[Final draft guidance](#) recommends ruxolitinib as an option for non-segmental

vitiligo with facial involvement in people aged 12 years or older when first-line topical treatments have failed or are unsuitable. The recommendation is narrower than the marketing authorisation.

NICE estimates that more than 80,000 adults and adolescents in England could benefit.

Reaction From Patient Groups

Emma Rush, chief executive of Vitiligo Support UK, described the decision as a “landmark” that would make “a massive difference to patients' lives.”

Abigail Hurrell, chief executive of the Vitiligo Society, said the approval marked “a historic milestone” as the first time that the NHS had recognised and funded a dedicated repigmentation treatment. She said it acknowledged the significant psychological, social, and medical impact of vitiligo.

Ruxolitinib cream is supplied as 15 mg/g. The list price is £657 for a 100-g tube. NICE's recommendation is conditional on a confidential commercial discount agreed with the NHS.

Dr Sheena Meredith is an established medical writer, editor, and consultant in healthcare communications, with extensive experience writing for medical professionals and the general public. She

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Credits

Lead image: Incyte

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