

FAQ about DCVax®-L

What is DCVax®-L?

DCVax®-L is a vaccine, developed by Northwest Biotherapeutics, that is made from each patient's own dendritic cells. Dendritic cells are a type of immune cell that function to help the body's immune system recognise and attack tumour cells.

How does DCVax®-L work?

The process of making a dendritic cell vaccine is complex and involves taking both tumour cells and blood from the patient. Immune cells are separated from the patient's blood and exposed to the tumour cells – it is through this process that dendritic cells learn to recognise the specific markers and proteins associated with the patient's tumour cells. The “educated” dendritic cells are then injected back into the patient where they go on to recruit and “teach” other immune cells to recognise and attack the cancerous cells.

How is DCVax®-L administered?

The vaccine is administered by an intra-dermal injection in the arm (similar to a flu jab).

What are the requirements to produce DCVax®-L?

In order to produce DCVax®-L, two to three grams of frozen tumour tissue are usually required to make the eleven-shot three year cycle of DCVax®-L injections. If tumour tissue has been frozen, it must have been saved without any chemicals or preservatives, and not in saline or blocks of paraffin. Unfortunately tumour banks and pathology departments frequently use paraffin or other preservatives that render the tissue unusable for the DCVax®-L manufacturing process.

Some surgeons use Gliadel® wafers. These wafers are soaked with a type of chemotherapy which is meant to poison tumour cells, and are placed in the tumour cavity in the brain when the tumour is surgically removed. If Gliadel® wafers were used then DCVax®-L is usually not a treatment option because the chemotherapeutic leaching from the wafer will also kill immune cells which enter the tumour cavity to fight residual tumour cells.

How can I access DCVax®-L?

The clinical trial is currently ongoing but is not accepting any further participants. Once complete the results from the trial, if positive, will be used to seek approval from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to then make it available through the NHS. The vaccine can currently be accessed privately and interested individuals are encouraged to speak to their clinicians with the provided information.

What is the cost of DCVax®-L?

The cost of the DCVax®-L is currently undetermined, as the vaccine is currently being developed and requires approval from the MHRA. Your clinician will be able to provide you with more information regarding privately funding the treatment.