

[Pembrolizumab](#)

Essential medicine status

Section:

[8. Immunomodulators and antineoplastics](#) [8.2. Antineoplastics and supportive medicines](#) [8.2.3. Immunomodulators](#)

ATC codes: [L01FF02](#)

Indication

Melanoma of skin ICD11 code: [2C30](#)

INN

Pembrolizumab

Medicine type

Biological agent

List type

Core

Additional notes

*including quality-assured biosimilars

Formulations

Parenteral > General injections > IV: 25 mg per mL in 4 mL vial

EML status history

First added in 2025 ([TRS 1064](#))

Sex

All

Age

Adolescents and adults

Therapeutic alternatives

[nivolumab](#) (ATC codes: [L01FF01](#))

Parenteral > General injections > IV: 10 mg per mL concentrate solution for infusion

Patent information

Main patent is active in several jurisdictions. For more information on specific patents and license status for developing countries visit www.MedsPal.org

Read more [about patents](#).

Tags

Cancer

Wikipedia

[Pembrolizumab](#)

[DrugBank](#)

[Pembrolizumab](#)

Summary of evidence and Expert Committee recommendations

With the 2025 recommendation to list pembrolizumab for first-line monotherapy of metastatic non-small cell lung cancer with high PD-L1 expression ($\geq 50\%$), first-line monotherapy for deficient mismatch repair/microsatellite instability-high metastatic colorectal cancer, and in combination with platinum-based chemotherapy, as first-line treatment of metastatic cervical cancer with PD-L1 expression $\geq 1\%$, the Expert Committee recommended changing the current square box listing of nivolumab as the class representative and pembrolizumab as the specified therapeutic alternative for metastatic melanoma, to make pembrolizumab the class representative with nivolumab as the specified therapeutic alternative. This is intended to signal to countries the possibility of aggregating procurement of a single molecule, pembrolizumab, for multiple cancer indications, which can influence price negotiations with manufacturers. Limiting procurement fragmentation by focusing on a select few immune checkpoint inhibitors is likely to facilitate central purchasing through competitive tendering and better competition from pembrolizumab biosimilars, thereby increasing access.