

What you need to know about biosimilar drugs

Your questions answered



What are biologics and biosimilars?

- Biologics are drugs that are made from living cells, like those from animals, bacteria or yeast.
- Biosimilars are highly similar copies of reference biologic drugs (the original brand name biologic drug) that have already been sold in Canada.

Are biosimilars new?

- Biosimilars are not new. Europe and Canada have used biosimilars to treat diseases for many years, including arthritis, Crohn's disease and diabetes.
- Canada has used biosimilars since 2016 to treat the side effects of cancer treatments.

- Europe has used biosimilars since 2017 to treat cancer.
- Now, many of the same biosimilars used in Europe to treat cancer are being used in Canada.

Are biosimilars safe and effective?

- Yes, biosimilars are safe and work in the exact same way as the reference biologic drug to treat your cancer. There are no clinically meaningful differences between a biosimilar and its reference biologic drug.
- As with any drug, there is always a risk that you may have side effects. Your healthcare team will manage any side effects you may have.

This document has been created by the pan-Canadian Oncology Biosimilars Initiative, which is a joint initiative between the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance and Cancer Care Ontario (in time, Ontario Health) on behalf of all provincial, territorial and federal public drug plans.



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