

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.

Why am I being prescribed a biosimilar?

- You are being prescribed a biosimilar because it is an effective treatment for your cancer and works in the exact same way as the reference biologic drug.
- Biosimilars are less expensive to produce than the reference biologic drug, reducing costs by up to \$1.8 billion each year. The money saved can be spent on the newest and best treatments to help improve patient outcomes.

How will I be monitored?

- All patients on any type of cancer treatment will be monitored by their healthcare team. If you have any problems during treatment, speak to your healthcare team right away.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

- Contact your healthcare team if you have any questions about the drug you are taking, treatment or side effects.

Notes:

To find out more, visit:

cancercareontario.ca/Biosimilars

Developed in consultation with:

