# 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:





