

Understanding biosimilar medications

In healthcare, the words 'biologic' and 'biosimilar' are frequently used when talking about medications. However, these terms can sometimes be confusing. Here's a short overview to help clarify the difference.

Speak to your
healthcare team for
more information.



What is a biologic drug?

Biologic therapies are proteins that are made using substances found inside living cells. They are then used to target parts of the immune system in order to treat a variety of conditions. Biologic therapies are commonly used in the treatment of IBD.

What is a biosimilar drug?

A 'biosimilar' is a biologic medication. It is highly similar but not identical to the original biologic drug. A biosimilar treats the same conditions as the original drug and is just as effective and safe. A switch to a biosimilar may be recommended by your healthcare team, for reasons such as insurance and reimbursement.

Are they safe?

Yes! Patients and healthcare providers can trust that biosimilars are safe and effective for their approved uses. Biosimilars are thoroughly screened and regulated by Health Canada.

Does biosimilar = generic/no-name drug?

Biosimilars are not the same as generic drugs. Generics are designed to be identical to the original drug. Health Canada treats biosimilars as completely new drugs because it is impossible to make an exact match of a biologic drug.

Here are some examples:

- Infliximab: original=RemicadeTM, has 3 biosimilars: AvsolaTM, InflectraTM and RenflexisTM
- Ustekinumab: original= StelaraTM (and may also be called FinliusTM) has 2 biosimilars: JamtekiTM and WezlanaTM SteQeymaTM (CT-P43),
- Adalimumab: original= HumiraTM has 8 biosimilars: AmgevitaTM, AbriladaTM, HulioTM, HadlimaTM, SimlandiTM, YuflymaTM, and IdacioTM



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