

Biosimilar Drugs

BC Cancer will be implementing biosimilars in fall 2019, starting with bevacizumab biosimilar in **new** gastrointestinal, gynecological, central nervous system, and sarcoma patients. Trastuzumab and rituximab biosimilars are anticipated to be available in spring 2020. Go to bccancer.bc.ca/biosimilars for more info.

1 What is a biosimilar?

A biosimilar is a biologic medicine (a medicine made inside of a living cell) that works the same as the original brand name biologic drug (reference biologic).

Biosimilars have been used in Canada since 2009. Health Canada has approved biosimilar treatments for many diseases including arthritis, diabetes and cancer.

2 Are biosimilars safe?

Biosimilars are as safe and effective (work just as well) as the reference biologic drug, and work the same way as the reference biologic drug.

Health Canada has strict rules that companies must follow when making and testing a biosimilar. All biosimilars used in Canada must meet the same high standards as reference biologics.

3 What is the benefit of using biosimilars?

Using biosimilars will save money for our cancer system. The money we save can be used to pay for new cancer treatments.

4 Will my care be different if I use a biosimilar?

No. Your care will be the same whether you take a reference biologic drug or a biosimilar.

You should expect to have the same results and the same side effects.

If you have any problems while taking biosimilars, talk to your health care team right away.

5 How will I know I will be taking a biosimilar or a reference biologic drug?

No changes to your existing treatment will be made without talking to you.

If you are starting a new treatment and would like to know whether this contains a biosimilar please ask your oncologist, nurse or pharmacist.

6 Where can I get more information about biosimilars?

- Talk to your oncologist, nurse or pharmacist.
- BC Cancer's biosimilars website: bccancer.bc.ca/biosimilars
- Health Canada's Biosimilars Fact Sheet: Visit canada.ca and search for biosimilars.
- Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH)'s biosimilars website has detailed information about biosimilars. cadth.ca/biosimilar-drugs

