

Brush Up on Biosimilars

You'll see **more Rxs for biosimilars**...now that there are over 60 available in Canada. And around 10 were approved in 2024 alone.

For example, there are now several biosimilars approved for ustekinumab (*Stelara*)...with *Pyzchiva* and *Steqeyma* being the latest.

Keep in mind, biosimilars aren't generics. It's not possible to create an exact copy of the original reference product...since biologics contain larger, more complex molecules than most traditional drugs.

This means that biosimilars usually can't be automatically substituted for the reference biologic.

But biosimilars show NO clinically meaningful differences in safety, purity, and potency compared to the reference biologic.

Note that biosimilars may not have all the same indications as the reference product. This is mostly due to patent protection...NOT lack of effectiveness.

Watch payer alert screens for messaging as to which product is covered...or if they prefer a different med altogether.

For instance, infliximab (*Remicade*) costs about \$2,100 for a 200 mg dose...versus about \$1,000 for the biosimilar *Renflexis*.

Continue to work with your pharmacist to request a new Rx when switching to a biosimilar or when a med switch is required.

Stay alert for mix-ups. Verify the trade name and DIN...especially if you stock multiple biosimilars. For example, adalimumab has several biosimilars (*Abrilada*, *Amgevita*, etc).

Check for differences between biosimilars. For instance, concentrations and stability vary among adalimumab products...and some may contain latex. Double-check the product monograph if needed.

Also keep an eye out for different product strengths. For example, etanercept (*Enbrel*) comes in a 50 mg prefilled syringe, but the biosimilar *Erelzi* comes in both 25 mg and 50 mg prefilled syringes.

Review our resource, Facts About Biosimilars, for more FAQs.

Key References:

-Health Canada. Biosimilar biologic drugs in Canada: Fact Sheet. August 27, 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/biologics-radiopharmaceuticals-genetic-therapies/applications-submissions/guidance-documents/fact-sheet-biosimilars.html> (Accessed December 18, 2024).

-Cohen HP, Bodenmueller W. Additional Data in Expanded Patient Populations and New Indications Support the Practice of Biosimilar-to-Biosimilar Switching. *BioDrugs*. 2024 May;38(3):331-339.

Pharmacy Technician's Letter Canada. January 2025, No. 410149

Cite this document as follows: Article, Brush Up on Biosimilars, Pharmacy Technician's Letter Canada, January 2025

The content of this article is provided for educational and informational purposes only, and is not a substitute for the advice, opinion or diagnosis of a trained medical professional. If your organization is interested in an enterprise subscription, email sales@trchealthcare.com.

© 2025 Therapeutic Research Center (TRC). TRC and Pharmacy Technician's Letter Canada and the associated logo(s) are trademarks of Therapeutic Research Center. All Rights Reserved.