PATIENT INFORMATION ON BIOSIMILARS

Some brand names include:
Adalimumab: Amgevita, Hadlima, Hyrimoz, Idacio
Etanercept: Brenzys, Yuflyma
Infliximab: Inflectra, Renflexis, Remsima SC
Rituximab: Riximyo, Ruxience, Truxima

This information sheet has been produced by the Australian Rheumatology Association to help you understand the medicine that has been prescribed for you.

What are biological medicines?

Biological medicines contain substances that are made by living cells or organisms. They have completely changed treatment for conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel diseases, cancer, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, kidney disease and severe psoriasis.

What is a biosimilar medicine?

A biosimilar medicine is a highly similar (but not identical) version of an original biological medicine. There is no meaningful difference in its safety, quality and effectiveness compared to the original biological medicines. All biosimilar medicines must be approved by the TGA after analysis of data regarding their safety, quality, consistency and effectiveness.

Are biosimilar medicines the same as generic medicines?

No. A generic brand of medicine is an identical copy of the original medicine.
Biosimilar medicines are not referred to as generic medicines because the process that produces biological medicines are naturally variable. No two batches of a biological medicine are ever exactly the same, even when produced by the same manufacturer.

Why are biosimilar medicines important?

The use of biosimilar medicines can improve the health care for all Australians.

Biological medicines are high-cost medicines costing the federal government billions of dollars each year. Introducing biosimilar medicines into the market (once the original biological medicine goes off patent) increases market competition and drives down prices thereby making these life changing medicines more affordable and accessible for the benefit of Australian patients.

Biosimilar medicines give patients access to more brand options and can reduce the risk of medicine shortages.

What else should I know about biosimilar medicines?

Compared with the original biological medicine, a biosimilar medicine has:

- the same treatment benefit
- the same potential side effects
- the same strength and dosage.

Sometimes biological medicines and their biosimilars use a different type of injection pen or syringe and you may need to learn to use a new type of device. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist to understand any differences in the way you will use the medicine.

Is it safe to take a biosimilar if I started my treatment on a bio-originator first?

Generally biosimilar medicines can be used whether or not you have been treated with an original biological medicine first. Always talk to your treating specialist about available treatment options including the risks and benefits of switching to a biosimilar medicine.

Where can I find further information?

You can refer to more information in the following resources:

- www.health.gov.au/biosimilars
- **Biosimilar medicines: the basics:** https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2022/04/biosimilar-medicines-the-basics-for-consumers-and-carers.pdf
- **About biosimilars** https://www.nps.org.au/consumers/biosimilars-for-consumers#consumers

You can also discuss any further questions you have about biosimilar medicines with your health care provider.

Questions?

If you have any questions or concerns, write them down and discuss them with your doctor.

Your doctor's contact details

You should see your rheumatologist regularly to make sure the treatment is working and to minimise any possible side effects.

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