

Biologics and Biosimilar Medicines

A biologic is a medicine made from a living thing like a bacteria, yeast and animal cells.

They treat things like:

- cancer,
- diabetes
- psoriasis
- rheumatoid arthritis, and
- inflammatory bowel disease.

Reference Medicines

“Reference” means the “first” of this type of biologic medicine to be approved.

Biosimilar Medicine

This is medicine that is highly **similar** to a reference medicine, i.e., an existing biologic medicine. To be approved by the FDA, these medicines have gone through a lot of testing to show they have similar safety and treatment effects.

Benefits include:

- Lower drug prices
- Lower healthcare costs
- Better access to medicine

Naming of Biologics and Biosimilars

Biosimilars are named after the medicine.

Biosimilars include four letters at the end of the medicine name. The brand names are not the same. See examples below.

Medicine (brand name)	Biosimilar Medicine (brand name)
infliximab (Remicade [®])	infliximab-axxq (Avsola [®]) infliximab-qbtx (Ixifi [®]) infliximab-abda (Renflexis [®]) infliximab-dyyb (Inflectra [®])
rituximab (Rituxan [®])	rituximab-abbs (Truxima [®]) rituximab-pvvr (Ruxience [®]) rituximab-arrx (Riabni [®])
insulin glargine (Lantus [®])	insulin glargine-yfgn (Semglee [®]) insulin glargine-aglr (Rezvoglar [®])
adalimumab (Humira [®])	adalimumab-atto (Amjevita [®]) adalimumab-bwwd (Hadlima [®]) adalimumab-adbm (Cyltezo [®]) adalimumab-aqvh (Yusimry [®]) adalimumab-adaz (Hyrimoz [®])
filgrastim (Neupogen [®])	Filgrastim-sndz (Zarxio [®])

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 8/2023. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#8000.