

Biosimilar Medicines for Cancer

A biosimilar medicine, sometimes called a biosimilar, is a close copy of a biologic medicine, which is made from proteins or pieces of proteins. Immunotherapy and some targeted therapies used to treat cancer are examples of biologic medicines, but only some of them have biosimilar versions.

A biosimilar is different from a generic drug. A generic drug is an exact copy of another drug that is made from chemicals. Unlike generic drugs, a biosimilar is made from a living source, so it is very similar to a biologic medicine, but is not an exact copy.



How do biosimilar medicines work?

A biosimilar used to treat cancer works much like the biologic medicine that it's copied from. Different biosimilars can:

- Help the body find and kill cancer cells
- Help stop cancer cells from growing
- Help the immune system attack the cancer cells



Are biosimilar medicines safe?

Just like other medicines, a biosimilar is tested in clinical trials to be sure it is as safe and effective as the biologic medicine it's copied from.



Questions to ask

Here are some questions you can ask your doctor and health care team:

- Is there a biosimilar available for the treatment you recommend?
- What are the pros and cons of getting a biosimilar?
- How often will I get treatment?
- How long will my treatment last?
- Where will I go to get my treatment?
- Will I need other types of treatment?
- What side effects could I have?
- How can my side effects be managed and what can I do about them?
- Will my insurance pay for my treatment? How much will I have to pay?
- When should I call the doctor or nurse?

For cancer information, day-to-day help, and support, call the American Cancer Society at **1-800-227-2345** or visit us online at **cancer.org/biosimilars**. We're here when you need us.