



PATIENT INFORMATION

Biosimilar Information Leaflet

One of the medicines your doctor has previously prescribed you is called a biologic medicine. Instead of this biologic, your hospital now uses a biosimilar. This leaflet will help you understand more about biologic and biosimilar medicines, but if you have any questions please ask your pharmacist, nurse or doctor.

What is a biologic?

Biologic medicines are made by living cells in a controlled way, rather than being built as synthetic chemicals like regular medicines, such as tablets. Think of them in the same way that bread or yoghurt is made using living cells. The original biologics were first used to treat people with serious illnesses in the UK over 20 years ago and they have improved life for millions of people worldwide.

What is a biosimilar?

You may have heard of some medicines you take described as generics, for example supermarket own brand ibuprofen is the generic version of Nurofen®. Generics are exact copies of the original medicine and are relatively simple to copy and manufacture. The same idea applies to biosimilars, but it is not possible to make an exact copy of an original biologic medicine due to their size and the complex way they are made. Biosimilars are highly similar to the original medicine but not identical. They have been thoroughly tested to show no difference in terms of how the medicine works, its effectiveness and safety. Biosimilars will have a different brand name to the original biologic medicine.

How can I be confident that it will work the same?

The companies that make biosimilars have to show the licensing authority very strict evidence of their effectiveness, safety and quality. Clinical studies have to be conducted in a large group of people to show that the medicine works just as well and is just as safe as the original biologic.

Biosimilars take several years and cost many millions of pounds to develop and prove that they work in the same way to the original medicine. This is another way biosimilars are different to generics. Generics do not need studies in people with disease and take much less time and money to develop.

What are the benefits?

You can expect to have the same results from your biosimilar as if you'd had the original medicine. Sometimes it is provided in a new device such as an injection pen. There is a benefit to the NHS too. Biosimilars are usually provided at a much lower price than the original biologic. This helps the NHS provide complex medicines at better prices and improve treatment for people with conditions like yours.