PATIENT INFORMATION ON BIOSIMILARS

Some brand names include:
Adalimumab: Amgevita, Hadlima, Hyrimoz, Idacio
Etanercept: Brenzys
Infliximab: Inflectra, Renflexis, Remsima
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 medications?

Biological medications contain substances that are made by living cells or organisms. They have revolutionised treatment of variety of conditions including rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory bowel diseases, cancer, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, kidney disease and severe psoriasis.

What is a biosimilar medication?

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

Are biosimilar medications the same as generic medications?

No. A generic brand of medication is an identical copy of the original medication.
Biosimilar medications are not referred to as generic medications because the process that produces biological medications are naturally variable. No two batches of a biological medications are ever exactly the same.

Why are biosimilar medications important?

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

Biological medications are high-cost medications costing the federal government billions of dollars each year. Introducing biosimilar medications into the market (once the original biological medication 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 medications give patients access to more brand options and can reduce the risk of medication shortages.

What else should I know about biosimilar medications?

Compared with the original biological medication, a biosimilar medication is:

- Provides the same treatment benefit
- Has the same potential side effects
- Has the same strength and dosage

Sometimes biological medications 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 medication.

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

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

Where can I find further information?

You can refer to detailed information for consumers on the Biosimilar Awareness Initiative webpage at
www.health.gov.au/biosimilars

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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