

Biosimilars Initiative

Infliximab

BC PharmaCare coverage is changing for people taking Remicade®.

What is changing?

The Biosimilars Initiative is switching PharmaCare patients taking Remicade for certain indications over to the biosimilar brand versions of infliximab (Inflectra® and Renflexis™).

During the six-month transition periods for each phase (see below), PharmaCare will cover the originator and biosimilar brands of infliximab for the affected indications. These transition periods will provide time for patients to inform themselves and start the switching process with their prescriber. At the end of each phase, PharmaCare will only cover Inflectra or Renflexis for the affected indications.

Phase One: May 27, 2019 — November 25, 2019

Drug	Originator	Biosimilar	Indications Affected
infliximab	Remicade	Inflectra Renflexis	Ankylosing spondylitis Plaque psoriasis Psoriatic arthritis Rheumatoid arthritis
Meet with your prescriber by November 25, 2019 to discuss switching to a new version of your medication. As of November 26, 2019, Remicade will no longer be covered without exceptional request.			

Phase Two: September 5, 2019 — March 5, 2020

Drug	Originator	Biosimilar	Indications Affected
infliximab	Remicade	Inflectra Renflexis	Crohn's disease* Ulcerative colitis*
Meet with your prescriber by March 5, 2020 to discuss switching to a new version of your medication. As of March 6, 2020, Remicade will no longer be covered without exceptional request.			
*Pediatric patients on Remicade will be switched to an infliximab biosimilar. PharmaCare is working closely with B.C. Children's Hospital to accomplish this, and pediatric patients may not be switched on the same timeline as adult patients.			

What are biologic and biosimilar drugs?

Biologic (originator) drugs are medications made using living organisms (such as yeast or animal cells) to produce complex proteins that are purified and injected to affect certain processes in the human body.

Biosimilar drugs are designed to be as safe and effective as the original biologic (originator) drug, and to treat the same chronic conditions. Because the production of biologics is complicated and the molecules themselves are complex, an originator drug and its biosimilar are highly similar, but not identical.

Health Canada is responsible for ensuring the safety, efficacy, and quality of all new drugs on the market in Canada including biologics and biosimilars. The biosimilars involved in the Biosimilars Initiative have been approved by Health Canada after much extensive functional, structural, and clinical study comparing biosimilars to their originators. Health Canada expects no meaningful differences in switching from routine use of an originator drug to an authorized biosimilar for an approved indication.

In B.C., the Ministry of Health will be carefully monitoring biosimilar treatments, patient outcomes, and feedback from patients and health practitioners both during and after the Biosimilars Initiative.

Why is PharmaCare coverage changing?

As new treatments are developed, PharmaCare must review which drugs are covered and carefully consider how to best meet the needs of B.C. residents.

Since the introduction of biologic drugs in the 1980s, these treatments have become the biggest drug expense in Canada. As patents on biologic drugs begin to expire, other manufacturers can start producing a highly similar version of the medication, with no clinically meaningful differences in safety and efficacy. These new versions are called biosimilars.

Remicade is PharmaCare's second-largest biologic expense. Since biosimilars are developed based on previous biologic work and require less research and development, they are less expensive to produce without compromising efficacy and safety, and offers major cost savings that can be reinvested into our healthcare system. This in turn supports a healthy and competitive drug market where more manufacturers can produce new, affordable, and accessible drugs for many patients.

How do I maintain my infliximab coverage?

1. Make an appointment with your Remicade prescriber (i.e., your rheumatologist, dermatologist, gastroenterologist) during the appropriate switch period.
2. Discuss switching to Inflectra or Renflexis with your prescriber or pharmacist. (Note: Only your prescriber can write a new prescription.)
3. Your prescriber will explain the switch process, discuss your biosimilar options, write you a new prescription, and register you with a new patient support program.
4. Ensure that you have spoken with your prescriber and initiated your switch to a biosimilar by November 25, 2019 (phase one) or March 5, 2020 (phase two), depending on the affected indications.

Where can I get more information?

Visit www.gov.bc.ca/biosimilars for more details on the Biosimilars Initiative, frequently asked questions, and other resources.

Or contact us by:

Email: Biosimilars.Initiative@gov.bc.ca

Phone: 1 844 915-5005 (Mon — Fri, 8:30AM — 4:30PM)

PharmaCare recognizes that some patients have exceptional medical requirements that may prevent switching to a biosimilar at this time. Your prescriber will assist you in determining whether it may be medically necessary to request exceptional Special Authority approval for continued coverage of Remicade.