

Biosimilars Initiative

Insulin glargine

BC PharmaCare coverage is changing for people who take Lantus®.

Meet with your prescriber before November 26 to discuss switching to a new version of your medication.

What is changing?

PharmaCare now covers the Basaglar™ brand of insulin glargine, instead of the Lantus brand.

If you use Lantus and depend on PharmaCare coverage for your medication, you should make an appointment with your prescriber to discuss switching.

Between May 27 and November 25, 2019, anyone with existing Special Authority coverage for Lantus will have coverage for both brands, to provide time to switch to the new version of your medication.

As of November 26, 2019, PharmaCare will cover only Basaglar.

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.

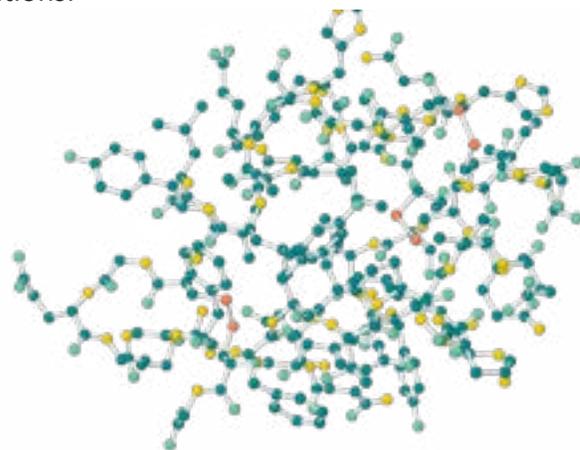
Since the introduction of biologic drugs in the 1980s, these treatments have become the biggest drug expense in Canada. As patents on biologic drugs begin to expire, other manufacturers can start producing a highly similar version of the medication, which has no difference in effect, at a much lower cost. These versions are called biosimilars.

Lantus is one of the more expensive diabetes treatments covered by PharmaCare. By switching to a biosimilar, you will help save millions of dollars a year. This is an opportunity to maximize resources, expand coverage for new treatments, and improve patient access to more medications.

Will I be affected?

You will be affected if you

- currently use Lantus
- receive PharmaCare coverage through Fair PharmaCare or any plan other than Plan W (First Nations Health Benefits)



What are biologic and biosimilar drugs?

Biologic drugs are medications made by 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 conditions. Because the production of biologics is complicated and the molecules themselves are complex, an originator and biosimilar are very similar, but not identical.

To be approved in Canada, a biosimilar must be proven to have no clinically meaningful differences from the originator. Studies must show that there are no differences in outcomes for patients taking the biosimilar compared to those taking the originator drug.

Lantus is the brand name for the originator version of insulin glargine. A biosimilar version of insulin glargine is available under the brand name Basaglar.

Health Canada supports switching from an originator to a biosimilar, recommending that the decision to switch be made by the prescriber and patient, taking into account the biosimilar policy in their province.

How do I maintain my coverage?

To maintain your coverage:

1. Make an appointment with the medical practitioner who prescribes your Lantus (i.e. your endocrinologist, diabetes specialist, general practitioner, or nurse practitioner).
2. Discuss switching to Basaglar with your prescriber or pharmacist. (Note: Only your prescriber can write a new prescription.)
3. Your prescriber will guide you through the switching process, write you a new prescription, and answer any questions you may have.
4. Ensure that you have spoken with your prescriber and initiated your switch to Basaglar by November 25, 2019.

PharmaCare recognizes that some patients have medical requirements that may prevent switching to a biosimilar at this time. Your prescriber will help decide whether to request exceptional Special Authority approval for continued coverage of Lantus.

Where can I get further information?

Visit www.gov.bc.ca/biosimilars for detailed information on

- the Biosimilars Initiative
- how you may be affected
- biologic and biosimilar drugs
- PharmaCare evidence-informed decisions
- frequently asked questions
- other resources

Still have questions? Contact us at Biosimilars.Initiative@gov.bc.ca