

Biosimilars Initiative – insulin lispro and insulin aspart

BC PharmaCare coverage is changing for people who take Humalog® and NovoRapid® rapid-acting insulins

What is changing?

The Biosimilars Initiative is switching all PharmaCare-covered patients taking Humalog® and NovoRapid® rapid-acting insulins to biosimilar versions. Those taking Humalog will switch to Admelog® and those taking NovoRapid will switch to Trurapi® if they want to maintain their coverage.

Originator	Conditions include	PharmaCare-covered biosimilar	Switch Period
insulin lispro (Humalog®)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">type 1 diabetestype 2 diabetes	Admelog®	November 30, 2021 to May 29, 2022
insulin aspart (NovoRapid®)		Trurapi®	

On November 30, 2021, Admelog and Trurapi were added as regular benefits to the PharmaCare formulary. Beginning December 15, 2021, PharmaCare no longer covers Humalog and NovoRapid for **new patients**. Only the biosimilar versions (Admelog or Trurapi) will be covered by PharmaCare if you are starting on insulin lispro or insulin aspart after December 15.

During the six-month switch period, from November 30, 2021 to May 29, 2022, PharmaCare will cover both the originator and biosimilar options for patients currently taking insulin lispro (Humalog) and insulin aspart (NovoRapid). The switch period will provide time for you to get informed, talk to your pharmacist, start the switching process with your prescriber, and if applicable, obtain a new insulin pen. New pens may be ordered free of charge from a pharmacy or by contacting Sanofi.Diabetes@SanofiCanada.com. Effective May 30, 2022, PharmaCare will no longer cover Humalog and NovoRapid.

*If you had coverage for Humalog Mix25, Humalog Mix50 or NovoMix 30 before December 15, 2021, your coverage will not be affected; you will not need to switch.

Retail pricing for rapid-acting insulins

PharmaCare is also changing its pricing policy for all rapid-acting insulins, including the newly added biosimilars. Previously, all RAIs were covered up to a certain amount only. This meant that patients had to pay costs above that amount.

As of November 30, 2021, PharmaCare will cover all listed RAIs at the retail price. This includes the biosimilars and insulin glulisine (Apidra®). The change means patients will be fully covered for RAIs (subject to a deductible or family maximum). They will no longer have unexpected out-of-pocket costs.

Will I be affected?

You will be affected by this change if you:

- currently use Humalog or NovoRapid, and
- receive PharmaCare coverage.

What are originator biologic and biosimilar drugs?

Originator biologic drugs are medications made with living organisms (such as yeast or animal cells) to produce complex proteins that affect certain processes in the human body.

Biosimilar drugs are designed to be as safe and effective as the originator drug, and to treat the same 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.

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

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

“Patients and healthcare providers can have confidence that biosimilars are effective and safe for each of their authorized indications. No differences are expected in efficacy and safety following a change in routine use between a biosimilar and its reference [originator] biologic drug in an authorized indication.”

-Health Canada, Biosimilars Fact Sheet

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.

Biologic drugs have become the biggest drug expense in Canada. As patents on biologic drugs 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.

Since biosimilars are developed based on previous biologic work and require less research and development, they are less expensive to develop, without compromising efficacy and safety, and offer major savings that can be reinvested in our healthcare system. This supports a healthy and competitive drug market where more manufacturers can produce new and affordable drugs for many patients.

How do I keep my coverage?

1. Make an appointment with your prescriber between November 30, 2021 and May 29, 2022.
2. Discuss switching to a biosimilar with your prescriber or pharmacist. (Note: Only your prescriber can write a new prescription.)
3. Your prescriber will explain your options and the switching process, and write you a new prescription.

Where can I get more information?

Visit www.gov.bc.ca/biosimilars for more details about the Biosimilars Initiative.

Or contact us by:

Email: Biosimilars.Initiative@gov.bc.ca

Phone: 1 844 915-5005 (Mon–Fri, 8:30 am–4:30 pm)