FRANKLY SPEAKING ABOUT CANCER

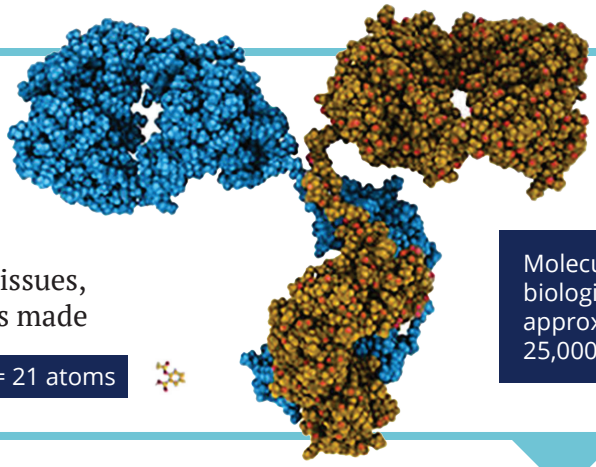
What are Biosimilar Drugs?

Biosimilar drugs may play a key role in your cancer treatment. These are newer drugs, and many people are unfamiliar with them. Learning what these drugs are and how they work can help you feel more confident about your care.

How Drugs are Made

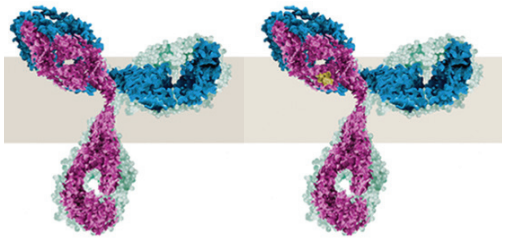
Most drugs are made from chemicals. When a company makes its own version of a chemical drug, it's called a generic. The brand name and generic drugs are the same.

Biologic drugs are made by or from living cells or tissues, not chemicals. They may be more complex than drugs made from chemicals. Also, their molecules are much larger.



Molecule of a biologic drug = approximately 25,000 atoms

Molecule of aspirin = 21 atoms



A biosimilar drug (on the left) is a copy version of an original biologic drug (on the right).

From Biologics to Biosimilars

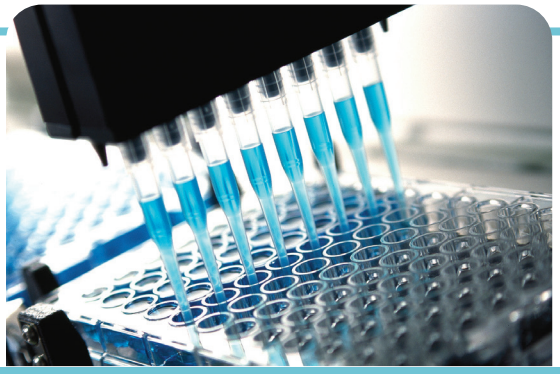
Because biologic drugs involve living organisms, it's not possible to make exact copies of them. In fact, each batch of the same biologic drug has small differences. That means different batches of biologics are not exactly identical. The good news is that these slight differences have no effect on how the drug works to treat your cancer.

When a new company copies a biologic drug, it's called a **biosimilar**. Biosimilar drugs are very close but not exact copies of approved biologic drugs. Biosimilars have minor differences compared with the original biologic drug. Patients can expect the same result no matter which drug they use.

Safe and Effective

Biosimilar drugs go through testing before the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approves them. The tests must show that they:

- Are as safe and effective as the original biologic drugs
- Work the same way in the body
- Are used the same way, come in the same dose, and have the same potential side effects as the original drug



Biosimilars for Cancer Patients

The first biosimilars were approved for use in the United States in 2015 and in Europe in 2006. There are now biosimilar drugs to treat many types of cancers, including:

- Breast
- Gastric
- Kidney
- Blood
- Colorectal
- Lung

They are also used with some cancer treatments to help stimulate blood cell growth.

Why Am I Getting a Biosimilar?

- Your pharmacy may carry only an original biologic or a biosimilar.
- Your insurance may cover one or both drugs.
- Your copayments may be different.
- You may receive one drug at a lower price through a patient assistance program.

Talk with your pharmacist if you need to switch to a biosimilar. While pharmacists can switch a brand name chemical drug with a generic without a new prescription, that may not be the case with biosimilars. Your pharmacist may need to call your doctor and ask for a new prescription. Laws on this process vary by state.

Are Biosimilars for You?

Talk with your health care team to find if biosimilar drugs are used to treat your type of cancer. They can help you understand your options. Learn more about biosimilar cancer drugs at **www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Biosimilars.**

This program is brought to you with financial support from:

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