# SWITCHING FROM BIOLOGIC TO BIOSIMILAR DRUGS

## What is changing?

By April 2022, biologic drugs will gradually be replaced with biosimilar drugs. If you are using a biologic drug, you can check with the healthcare professional who wrote your prescription or your pharmacist to discuss switching to a biosimilar drug. This change must be made before April 12, 2022.

Biosimilar drugs are safe and effective. They are authorized by Health Canada and evaluated by the Institut national d'excellence en santé et en services sociaux (INESSS) before being registered on the Régie d'assurance maladie du Québec (RAMQ)'s List of Medications.

## Who is affected?

All patients currently using biologic drugs should switch to biosimilars, with the following exceptions:

- Pregnant women should be transitioned to biosimilars in the 12 months after childbirth.
- Pediatric patients should be transitioned to biosimilars in the 12 months after their 18th birthday.
- Patients who have experienced two or more therapeutic failures while being treated with a biologic drug for the same chronic disease.

## How to make the transition?

**You do not have to take any further action. Your healthcare professional will contact you in due course.**

At your next routine appointment, discuss the transition to biosimilars with the healthcare professional who wrote your prescription. You will have time to discuss this since the change must be made by April 12, 2022.

The healthcare professional who wrote your prescription will walk you through the transition process, write a new prescription, and answer your questions.

In the meantime, go to Québec.ca/medicamentsbiosimilaires for more information.

## Why is there a change?

As new treatments are developed, INESSS evaluates and recommends them to the Minister of Health for their addition to the List of Medications reimbursed by the RAMQ.

Since the introduction of biologic drugs in the 1980s, these treatments have become a significant part of Canada's drug budget. When patents for biologic drugs expire, other manufacturers can produce similar versions called biosimilar drugs, or simply biosimilar. These drugs produce the same effect at a much lower cost.

Using a biosimilar drug extends coverage to new treatments and improves patient access to more drugs.

## What is the difference between a biologic drug and a biosimilar drug?

A biologic drug is a drug produced from living cells, such as animal cells, bacteria, or yeast. A biosimilar drug is a remarkably similar copy of a biologic drug.

When a biosimilar drug is marketed, the original brand biologic drug it is compared to is called the reference biologic drug. The term *innovator drug* is also synonymous with reference drug.

Biosimilar drugs are designed to be as safe and effective as the original biologic drug and to treat the same conditions.

## Where can I get more information?

Visit Québec.ca/medicamentsbiosimilaires for detailed information or talk to your clinician.

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