

# Biosimilar Medicines for Cancer

A biosimilar (or biosimilar medicine) is a close copy of an existing brand name biologic (or biologic medicine). They are both made from natural, living sources, such as yeast, bacteria, or animal cells. A biosimilar behaves similarly to its brand name biologic, so there's no real difference between how the two medicines work. Biosimilars are considered just as safe and effective as biologics and are less expensive. However, not all biologic medicines have biosimilar versions.



## How do biosimilar medicines work?

A biosimilar used to treat cancer works much like the biologic medicine that it's copied from. Different biosimilars can:

- Help stop cancer cells from growing
- Help the immune system better find and destroy cancer cells
- Help the body make more blood cells to replace ones lost because of other cancer treatments



## Are biosimilar medicines safe?

Just like other medicines, a biosimilar is tested in clinical trials to be sure it is as safe and effective as the biologic medicine it's copied from. They must be approved by the FDA before they can be used to treat a disease.



## Questions to ask

Here are some questions you can ask your doctor and cancer care team:

- Is there a biosimilar available for the treatment you recommend?
- What are the pros and cons of getting a biosimilar?
- How often will I get treatment? How long will my treatment last?
- Where will I go to get my treatment?
- Will I need other types of treatment?
- What side effects could I have?
- How can my side effects be managed, and what can I do about them?
- Will my insurance pay for my treatment? How much will I have to pay?
- When should I call the doctor or nurse?



To learn more about biosimilar medicines, visit the American Cancer Society website at [cancer.org/biosimilars](https://cancer.org/biosimilars) or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.