

## Alberta Biosimilars Initiative update

On December 12, 2019, the Alberta government introduced the Alberta Biosimilar Initiative, refer to Benefact 826, December 2019. This communication is to inform you that as of January 15, 2021, patients will only be provided coverage for the biosimilar version of the following drugs through Alberta's government-sponsored drug plans:

- Remicade,
- Enbrel (all indications except plaque psoriasis and pediatric juvenile idiopathic arthritis. Those that are on **Enbrel for plaque psoriasis will have until May 1, 2021, to switch to a biosimilar version**),
- Lantus,
- Neupogen,
- Neulasta,
- Copaxone, and
- Rituxan (for the indication of rheumatoid arthritis. Those that are on **Rituxan for granulomatosis with polyangiitis or microscopic polyangiitis will have until March 1, 2021, to switch to a biosimilar version**).

### Switching to a biosimilar

Patients currently on an originator drug for which there is a biosimilar version for their health condition must switch to its biosimilar version before January 15, 2021, in order to maintain coverage for the molecule through their Alberta government-sponsored drug plan.

Effective January 15, 2021, Alberta Health will no longer provide coverage for the originator brand drugs listed in the second column of the table below. Any patient using the originator drug for one of the listed health conditions will be required to switch to its corresponding biosimilar in the third column<sup>1</sup>.

Drug name	Originator brand name	Biosimilar brand name	Health conditions
Etanercept	Enbrel	Brenzys	Ankylosing spondylitis Rheumatoid arthritis
		Erelzi	Ankylosing spondylitis Psoriatic arthritis Rheumatoid arthritis
Infliximab	Remicade	Inflectra Renflexis	Ankylosing spondylitis Plaque psoriasis Psoriatic arthritis Rheumatoid arthritis Crohn's disease Ulcerative colitis

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# PHARMACY BENEFACT

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Drug name	Originator brand name	Biosimilar brand name	Health conditions
Insulin glargine	Lantus	Basaglar	Diabetes (type 1 and 2)
Filgrastim	Neupogen	Grastofil Nivestym	Neutropenia
Pegfilgrastim	Neulasta	Lapelga Fulphila Ziextenzo	Neutropenia
Glatiramer <sup>2</sup>	Copaxone	Glatect	Multiple sclerosis
Rituximab	Rituxan	Truxima Riximyo Ruxience	Rheumatoid arthritis

<sup>1</sup> Patients under the age of 18 do not have to switch to a biosimilar at this time.

<sup>2</sup> Glatiramer is a non-biologic complex drug.

All special authorization approvals that are in place for the originator biologic drug will be automatically applied to its biosimilar version(s). Note that the biosimilar and the originator biologic may require use of different infusion clinics. When patients are picking up their infused biosimilar product, please ensure they are transporting it to the appropriate clinic for their infusion appointment.

## Exceptions

Please note, if one of these exceptions apply to your patients, they will continue to be eligible for the originator biologic.

- Pregnant patients: a Biosimilar Initiative Exception Request form must be submitted. Requests for Lantus may be submitted by pharmacists with additional prescribing authorization. Requests for other biologics must be submitted by their specialist. Alberta Blue Cross will only consider approval based on pregnancy and approval will be granted until six months past the delivery due date. Those that are trying to conceive will not be approved.
- Pediatric patients: existing pediatric patients are exempt from switching from a biologic drug. No application is required.
- Those who have been approved for a biologic exception through special authorization due to a medical reason. If there is a medical reason why a patient cannot switch to the biosimilar, the prescriber can submit a request for exceptional coverage to Alberta Blue Cross. Requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

For the most current special authorization criteria, please visit the **Interactive Drug Benefit List** at [idbl.ab.bluecross.ca/idbl/load.do](http://idbl.ab.bluecross.ca/idbl/load.do) and search the drug name. Please visit **Alberta Health** online at [alberta.ca/biosimilar-drugs.aspx](http://alberta.ca/biosimilar-drugs.aspx) for a current list of biologics, their biosimilar equivalents and specific indications affected by this policy. As a reminder, supporting materials for patients and health care providers regarding the Alberta Biosimilar Initiative are available on the Alberta Blue Cross website at [ab.bluecross.ca/pdfs/Biosimilars-Resources-for-Patients.pdf](http://ab.bluecross.ca/pdfs/Biosimilars-Resources-for-Patients.pdf).

For assistance with benefit or claim inquiries, please contact an Alberta Blue Cross Pharmacy Services Provider Relations contact centre representative at

780-498-8370 (Edmonton and area)

403-294-4041 (Calgary and area)

1-800-361-9632 (toll free)

FAX 780-498-8406 (Edmonton and area)

FAX 1-877-305-9911 (toll free)

Alberta Blue Cross offers online access to current Pharmacy Benefacts and supplemental claiming information to assist with the submission of your direct bill drug claims.

Visit [ab.bluecross.ca/providers/pharmacy-home.php](http://ab.bluecross.ca/providers/pharmacy-home.php)

