

## Patient information

# Bioequivalent Medicines

### Pharmacy

We supply this leaflet if your treatment includes a biologic medicine. It will help you learn more about your medicine. Your healthcare team will have carefully selected which medicine is most helpful for you. If you have any questions, please ask your healthcare team.

#### **What is a biologic medicine?**

We are using biologic medicines more and more in healthcare and the NHS. They are treatment options for many kinds of diseases. For example, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, some cancers, and diabetes. Insulin is an example of a biologic medicine used for diabetes.

Living cells or organisms make biologic medicines in a carefully and closely controlled way. Biologic medicines are larger and more complex molecules than non-biologic medicines. So, it is not possible to produce an identical copy every time. There may be small changes in the complex structure, even between different batches of the same product or brand from the same company. It is important to keep any changes within precise limits, so processes to make biologic medicines must meet strict quality standards.

#### **What is a bioequivalent medicine?**

Biologic medicines can be very expensive, and time consuming to research and produce. So, at first only one drug company will make and sell a new original biologic medicine. After a time, other drug companies can make and sell copies of the medicine. We call the copies of the medicine bioequivalent. You may also hear them referred to as "biosimilars".

Bioequivalent medicines meet the same requirements and quality standards as the first original brand. They are subject to trials and tests to check they are safe and effective. They have approval and licences for use in the UK like other medicines.

**Bioequivalent medicines work in the same way as the original biologic medicine.**

**Bioequivalent medicines are as safe and effective as the original biologic medicine.**

## **Why do we use bioequivalent medicines in the NHS?**

The big advantage for the NHS is that bioequivalent medicines are much cheaper. This allows us to treat more patients with the best medicines. For instance, earlier treatment of arthritis with biologic medicines before symptoms get worse.

You and your healthcare team decide together which is the best treatment for you. We will prescribe and supply this treatment for you. You can be sure the medicine provided will meet UK quality standards.

## **Why do we change your biologic medicine to a different brand?**

There is lots of evidence that bioequivalent brands are effective, safe, and interchangeable. We have lots of experience of prior switches to bioequivalent medicines. Most people will not have any problems when they switch to a bioequivalent medicine. This means your medicine may change to a different brand during your treatment. As a result, the NHS makes sure it spends money sensibly. So, more people can get access to the best treatments via the NHS.

## **Before you get the medicine for the first time your specialist healthcare team will:**

- explain how the medicine works
- tell you what to expect and any possible side effects
- check you agree (consent) to treatment

We will supply the best value product we have at that time. This may be an original biologic brand or a bioequivalent medicine.

You may get different brands of the same biologic medicine over time. We won't need to ask you to agree each time we change the brand. We will let you know in advance if we plan to change your medicine. We will keep a record of exactly which product you get. You can talk to your healthcare team if you have concerns or questions.

## **Where can I get more details?**

Talk to your healthcare team or hospital pharmacist about your treatment. They will listen carefully to your concerns. They will answer any questions and/or help you find the support you might need.

We welcome questions and are here to support you.

## **Feedback**

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please

take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

### Further information

For further information about bioequivalent medicines in general visit: <https://www.patients-association.org.uk/switchingtobiosimilars> or scan the QR codes below.



**Patient association biosimilar patient information**



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