

Biosimilars vs. Generics

Generics and biosimilars have the potential to save employers and patients significant sums of money. Understanding what they are and how they are developed can help you make informed choices about your prescription therapy.



Generic drugs:

Lower-cost, clinically equivalent alternatives to their counterpart brand-name medications

- Chemically equal to the brand-name drug
- Required to have the same active ingredients, dosage, and strength as the brand-name drug
- Available only after the patent expires on a brand-name drug
- Approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and typically cost less than the brand-name drug

Biosimilars:

Biological drugs that are very similar to other biological drugs (called reference or originator drugs) that have already been approved by the FDA

- Derived from living organisms (e.g., animal or plant cells, and microorganisms such as bacteria or yeast)
- Made in different ways and of slightly different substances than reference drugs
- Required to be as safe as, work as well as, and work in the same way as the reference drug
- Used in the same way, at the same dose, and for the same condition as the reference drug
- Approved by the FDA and may cost less than the reference drugs

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In Summary

While both biosimilars and generics can help you save money on prescriptions, they are made and regulated differently. Because they are formulated exactly the same as the brand drug, generics can often be substituted for brand-name versions at your pharmacy. However, while biosimilars are usually more affordable than the reference drug, there are additional considerations in determining when they can be substituted for the original. Your healthcare provider or pharmacist is the best source of information about generic and biosimilar medications.

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