



October 24, 2019

## British Columbia’s Biosimilars Initiative

British Columbia is changing coverage for certain high-cost biologic drugs under its PharmaCare Program. Below is an overview of the changes and the potential impact on your plan and your plan members.

### What’s changing

BC’s PharmaCare Program coverage for three biologic drugs – Enbrel, Lantus and Remicade – is changing. These changes are taking place in two phases.

- Phase 1:** Starting November 26, 2019, BC’s PharmaCare Program will only provide coverage for Enbrel, Lantus and Remicade for certain medical conditions on an exception basis. Patients using one of these affected biologic drugs have until **November 25, 2019**, to consult with their doctor and consider a switch to one of the biosimilar drugs that are covered under the Program.

Originator Biologic	Biosimilar	Indications Affected
Enbrel®	Brenzys®	Ankylosing spondylitis Rheumatoid arthritis
	Erelzi™	Ankylosing spondylitis Psoriatic arthritis Rheumatoid arthritis
Remicade®	Inflectra® Renflexis®	Ankylosing spondylitis Plaque psoriasis Psoriatic arthritis Rheumatoid arthritis
Lantus®	Basaglar™	Diabetes (Type 1 and 2)

**Phase 2:** Starting March 6, 2020, BC’s PharmaCare Program will only provide coverage for Remicade for Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis on an exception basis. Patients using Remicade for Crohn’s disease or ulcerative colitis have until **March 5, 2020**, to consult with their doctor and consider a switch to one of the biosimilar drugs that are covered under the Program.



Originator Biologic	Biosimilar	Indications Affected
Remicade®	Inflectra® Renflexis®	Crohn’s disease Ulcerative colitis

## Biologics vs. Biosimilars

**Biologics** are drugs that are made from a living organism or its cells. They consist of large and complex molecules and are costly to produce.

**Biosimilars** are biologic drugs that are similar but not identical to an approved biologic. Biosimilar drugs can only enter the market after the patent expires for the originator biologic and are typically less expensive than the originator product.

## What do these changes mean for your BC employees?

At this time, there are no planned changes to our contracts or how plan members apply for prior authorization for Enbrel, Lantus or Remicade. This means that any employees affected by these changes continue to have a choice. They can choose to remain on their current biologic drug or switch to a biosimilar drug.

If employees choose to remain on their current biologic drug, they will no longer receive reimbursement from the BC PharmaCare Program for any portion of these drug costs. Instead, your group benefits plan will be the sole source of reimbursement for these employees.

We do not anticipate significant impacts to plan costs. Sun Life has agreements in place with manufacturers of the affected drugs to make the cost of these drugs comparable with those of the biosimilar drugs. Based on our analysis of our book of business, we expect the impact to you and other affected plan sponsors to be negligible, although it will vary by plan.

In terms of a plan member impact, those who choose to remain on their current biologic drug should keep three factors in mind:

1. **Deductibles and maximums for BC’s PharmaCare program:** Unless a plan member has received an exception to continue with their current biologic drug, their



costs will no longer accumulate towards their PharmaCare family deductible or family overall maximum. This could impact their out-of-pocket costs starting on November 26, 2019. More information on the Fair PharmaCare program, including deductibles and maximums, can be found [here](#).

- Coverage under other plans:** Some other private carriers will no longer be covering the affected biologic drugs starting November 26, 2019. This could impact a plan member's coverage on coordination-of-benefit claims through their spouse's plan, retiree plans or other coverage they may have through another provider. Plan members should check all existing coverage to determine how they may be impacted.
- Leaving their Sun Life plan:** If a plan member's employment relationship changes, they may not be covered under their existing workplace plan with Sun Life. This means they may no longer have any coverage for the affected drugs based on the provincial changes outlined above.

We encourage plan members to discuss their treatment options with their doctor before November 26, 2019. We will be notifying plan members in BC of these changes through the following initiatives:

- All plan members in BC will receive a notification on mysunlife.ca.
- We will be sending out a targeted [email](#) on October 31, 2019, to plan members who claimed for Lantus, Enbrel and Remicade in the last 12 months. For members without an email address on file we will be sending out a [letter](#).

To keep your plan members informed of these changes, we have attached a [flyer](#) for you to share with them.

### Questions?

Please contact your Sun Life Group Benefits representative.