

Fact Sheet

News from the IBD Help Center

BIOLOGICS

Biologics are laboratory-created antibodies that target the specific proteins responsible for inflammation in IBD. There are several biologic treatments for Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, and your doctor will work with you to find the one that best fits your treatment plan. Although biologics are not a cure for IBD, they can help control symptoms, reduce inflammation, and enable you and your doctor to work together toward remission.

Biosimilars

Biosimilars are biologic medications that are nearly identical copies of already approved biologic medications. There are no meaningful differences between the biosimilar and its matching biologic medication. They are just as safe and effective and are taken in the same form and dose. Most of the time, insurance companies may offer a biosimilar instead of its original biologic as a way to cut costs, with no meaningful change in effectiveness.

[Learn more about biosimilars](#)

Types of Biologic Therapies:

Anti-Tumor Necrosis Factor Agents (Anti-TNF Agents)

Anti-TNF medications are a type of biologic medication that stops a small protein in your body (known as tumor necrosis factor or TNF) from causing inflammation. It may take 8-12 weeks after starting this medication to notice an improvement in symptoms.

- Anti-TNF medications are indicated for patients with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.
- These medications can be given as injections or intravenous infusions.
- Anti-TNF biosimilars are also available.

Integrin Receptor Antagonists

These biologics prevent inflammation from occurring in the body by targeting proteins called integrin receptors.

- They are indicated for patients with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.
- These medications are first administered intravenously, followed by either infusions or injections for maintenance therapy.

Interleukin Antagonists

These biologics target specific proteins (interleukins) that play a key role in inflammation.

- They are indicated for patients with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.
- Some of these medications' first doses are administered intravenously, followed by injections, while others are only given as injections.
- Interleukin antagonist biosimilars are also available.

Common Side Effects:

- You may have redness, itching, or pain at the injection or infusion site.
- Common side effects of biologic medications include headache, fatigue, fever, chills, hives, and rashes.

- In rare cases, people may have allergic reactions.

Infections:

- Biologics affect the immune system and may impact your ability to fight infections.
- While taking this medication, talk to your doctor about ways to prevent infections, such as being up to date on appropriate vaccinations such as influenza, pneumonia, shingles, hepatitis A and B, and others.
- If you develop a fever or any other signs suggestive of an infection (like pneumonia, a UTI, etc.), be sure to tell your doctor right away.

Rare Risks:

- Anti-TNF medications taken along with other immune-suppressing medications have been associated with a small increase in lymphoma, a type of blood cancer.
- Liver problems
- Joint pains
- Lupus-like reactions
- Skin reactions, including a slightly increased risk of developing non-melanoma-type skin cancers

Combination Therapy

In some circumstances, your doctor may recommend adding an additional therapy to work in combination with the initial therapy. For example, this could include the addition of an immunomodulator (another type of immune-suppressing medication) to a biologic. Combining therapies can increase the effectiveness of the biologic, but there may also be an increased risk of additional side effects. Your doctor will work with you to identify the treatment option that is most effective for your individual needs.

[Animated Video](#)

[View the full list of FDA-approved biologics \(including biosimilars\) commonly prescribed for IBD](#)

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Dec 2025