Ministry of Health
Drug Plan and Extended Benefits
2nd Floor, 3475 Albert Street
Regina, Canada S4S 6X6

October 1, 2023

Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative: Notice to Patients

By March 31, 2024, individuals using **HUMALOG** insulin need to start using a **biosimilar** version of their insulin to keep their coverage under the Saskatchewan Drug Plan. The table below shows the available biosimilar insulin.

Patients and health care professionals can be confident that biosimilars are as effective and safe as the original reference biologic drug. A biosimilar works in the same way as the reference biologic drug, but is less expensive.

Insulin	Reference Biologic Brand and Formats	Biosimilar Insulin Brand and Formats	End of Transition Period
Insulin lispro 100 units/mL	**HUMALOG** - Cartridge - Pre-filled pen - Vial	**ADMELOG** - Cartridge - Pre-filled pen - Vial	**March 31, 2024**

*Please note: Coverage of **HUMALOG 200 units/mL** will continue to be available for patients who need a higher concentration formula, as there is no equivalent biosimilar format at this time.*

Saskatchewan Drug Plan coverage between now and March 31, 2024:
- Your current coverage of **HUMALOG** will be available **until March 31, 2024**.
- When you are ready to use a biosimilar, the biosimilar insulin brand will be covered according to your current coverage(s), deductible, and/or co-payment.

What you need to do before March 31, 2024, to keep your coverage:
- Continue using your insulin according to your prescriber's instructions.
- To start using a biosimilar insulin:
    - Ask the health care provider who normally prescribes your insulin; or
    - Ask your pharmacist if they can help you transition to a biosimilar insulin.
- Discuss your questions about biosimilars with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

After March 31, 2024, only the biosimilar version of this insulin will be eligible for Saskatchewan Drug Plan coverage. The reference biologic brand (**HUMALOG**) will no longer be covered, unless otherwise specified.

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If you have private drug coverage, contact your private insurance provider to ask how the Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative may apply to your private benefits.

For more information on the change in drug coverage for biosimilars:

- Review the enclosed handouts.
- Visit: www.saskatchewan.ca/biosimilars or scan the QR code with your phone.
- Call 1-800-667-7581 (toll-free) or 306-787-3317 (Regina).
- E-mail: sk.biosimilars@health.gov.sk.ca

Drug Plan and Extended Benefits

Enclosures

What are Biosimilars?

Biologic drug—a drug made from living organisms
Reference biologic or originator drug—the first version of a biologic drug to be made
Biosimilar drug—the next version of a biologic drug to be made after the reference biologic's patent expires

Humalog® is the reference biologic of insulin lispro. Admelog® is a biosimilar version of Humalog® currently available in Saskatchewan.

Biosimilars work in the same way as the reference biologic. They are built similarly and people can expect the same results from biosimilars.

Biosimilars are:

Safe

Effective

High Quality

Biosimilars are Tried and Tested:

Many people have successfully started or transitioned to a biosimilar: Provinces and territories across Canada (and many countries around the world) have similar policies that support the use of biosimilars.

Approved by Health Canada using a rigorous process: Drug studies and clinical trials must show that biosimilars are as effective and safe as reference biologics.

Biosimilars, like Admelog®, work as well as Humalog® at managing diabetes.

Available and used for many years: Biosimilars have been approved in Canada since 2009 and are used to treat diabetes, anemia, psoriasis, inflammatory bowel disease, rheumatoid arthritis, and other conditions.

What stays the same:

- **How effective your medication is:**
  Biosimilars are proven to work as well as reference biologics.
- **How you feel taking your medication:**
  There are no expected differences in side effects between the biosimilar and reference biologic.
- **How you take your medicine and your dose**.

What might be different:

- **How your medicine looks:**
  The package/container may be different.

Admelog®:

- Same dose as Humalog®
- Same storage as Humalog®

The pen used to give yourself Admelog® will be different from the pen you use for Humalog®.

- The pen needles you have been using will fit the new pen.

Talk to your healthcare providers to help you transition to a biosimilar.

Ask questions about:

- the similarities and differences between your reference biologic and the biosimilar.
- what to expect from the transition.
- where to find resources about biosimilars.

It is important to check your blood sugars regularly any time your insulin regimen changes, including when you transition to a biosimilar insulin.

QUESTIONS FOR A PHARMACIST?

medSask
YOUR MEDICATION INFORMATION SERVICE

Contact medSask to have your biosimilar questions answered free of charge by a pharmacist.

You can reach us by **phone: 1 800 665 3784** or **email: med.sask@usask.ca**.

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Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative
Information for Patients

Drug Plan and Extended Benefits Branch
3475 Albert Street
REGINA SK S4S 6X6
Phone: 1-800-667-7581 (306-787-3317 in Regina)
Email: sk.biosimilars@health.gov.sk.ca

About Biologic and Biosimilar Drugs

Biologic drugs are made from living organisms or their cells. They differ from most other drugs in that they are not made by chemicals.

Biologic drugs include hormones, blood products, antibodies, genes, and vaccines. Biologics treat many different diseases, including Crohn's and colitis, rheumatoid arthritis, and diabetes.

A reference biologic or "originator" drug is the first version of a biologic drug to be made.

Biosimilar drugs are the next versions of the biologic drug to be made after the reference biologic's patent expires. You can be confident that biosimilars are as effective and safe as reference biologics.

- Biosimilars work in the same way as the reference biologic, but are less expensive.
    - Biosimilars are less expensive because they are based on work already done to develop the reference biologic drug.
- You can expect the same results from biosimilars as the reference biologic you are familiar with.

Biosimilars are regulated and monitored by Health Canada. Clinical studies show that biosimilars have the same efficacy and safety as the reference biologic drug.

About the Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative

The Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative means patients will be covered for a biosimilar version of their biologic medication where one is available. Patients will need to start using a biosimilar by the end of the announced transition period, to maintain their Saskatchewan Drug Plan coverage.

You may be affected by this policy if:

1. You are using a reference biologic on the following list of drugs affected, and
2. You receive Saskatchewan Drug Plan coverage for this medication.

List of Drugs Affected:

Drug name	Reference biologic brand name (switch from)	Biosimilar brand name (switch to)	Health conditions	End of transition period*
Insulin lispro 100 units/mL	Humalog®	Admelog®	Diabetes	March 31, 2024

*The transition period for nine other drugs affected by the Biosimilars Initiative ended on April 30, 2023.

*Please note: **Humalog® 200 units/mL** insulin is not included in the Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative at this time, as there is no equivalent formulation for a biosimilar brand.*

The Biosimilars Initiative coverage policy will also apply to future reference biologics as biosimilar drugs are launched and listed on the Saskatchewan Formulary.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I have private coverage?

- The Biosimilars Initiative applies to patients receiving Saskatchewan Drug Plan coverage of a reference biologic drug on the List of Drugs Affected (see the previous section of this document).
- Your private insurance provider may coordinate your benefits with the Saskatchewan Drug Plan.
- Contact your private insurance provider with questions about your private drug coverage benefits and how the Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative may apply to your private benefits.

What if I don't think a biosimilar will work?

- Biosimilars work in the same way as the reference biologic.
- Biosimilar manufacturers submit studies to Health Canada and go through a rigorous process to prove that their biosimilar works as well and is as safe as the reference biologic.
- You can expect the same results from biosimilars as the reference biologic.
- Know that a growing number of patients around the world are safely using biosimilar treatments.
- Trust that your health care team is available if you have any questions or concerns about your treatment.
- To learn more about biosimilars:
  - Find trustworthy information on biosimilars (resources are available online at www.saskatchewan.ca/biosimilars).
  - Speak to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about your biosimilar questions and options.

What if I can't use a biosimilar?

- Your prescriber can help determine if you need to remain on the reference biologic for medical reasons.
- Your prescriber can submit a request for your situation to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Saskatchewan Drug Plan.

Where can I find more information and support?

- Go to our webpage: www.saskatchewan.ca/biosimilars
- Contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist with questions about biosimilar medications.
- medSask is a drug information service with pharmacists available to support you with questions about your biologic drug treatment. Visit medsask.usask.ca/general-public/biosimilars-in-saskatchewan, email med.sask@usask.ca, or call 1-800-665-3784.
- Many biosimilar manufacturers have Patient Support Programs and services to assist patients starting and transitioning to a biosimilar drug. Find the Patient Support Programs section on our webpage.
- For general questions about the Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative or your drug coverage, please contact the Drug Plan at sk.biosimilars@health.gov.sk.ca or call 1-800-667-7581 (306-787-3317 in Regina).