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

July 30, 2026

Dear Health-Care Providers:

RE: End of Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative Transition Period for Actemra® (tocilizumab), Stelara® (ustekinumab), and Xolair® (omalizumab)

Starting August 1, 2026, the following reference biologics are no longer eligible for coverage under the Saskatchewan Drug Plan:

Actemra® (tocilizumab) **Stelara®** (ustekinumab) **Xolair®** (omalizumab)

Under the Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative, patients receiving one of these reference biologics must transition to a biosimilar version to maintain Saskatchewan Drug Plan coverage of their treatment after July 31, 2026.

Biosimilar options are listed on www.saskatchewan.ca/biosimilars and https://formulary.drugplan.ehealthsask.ca/SearchFormulary. **Prescriptions must clearly indicate the biosimilar brand to be dispensed by the pharmacy.**

Patients who receive approval for an **exemption** from the Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative policy will continue to receive coverage of their reference biologic for an approved time period. Details are communicated directly to the prescriber and patient.

Patients receiving one of these reference biologics or **Prolia®** (denosumab) who **did not receive** a Patient Information Package in the initial mail-out will be mailed a package. Where required, Exception Drug Status (EDS) approval dates have been adjusted to provide time for these patients to talk to their health-care provider and get a new biosimilar prescription.

Please note, the end of the Biosimilars Initiative transition period for **Prolia®** (denosumab) is **January 31, 2027**.

Transitioning to a Biosimilar – Assessment of Unexpected Response

- medSask has a tool for prescribers to assess unexpected responses to biosimilars (enclosed). Please refer to medsask.usask.ca for more details.
- Prescribers are encouraged to consider all contributing factors prior to submitting a request for an exemption to the Biosimilars Initiative policy.

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Questions and Support

- For prescriber questions about the Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative:
  - Visit: www.saskatchewan.ca/biosimilars
  - Email: sk.biosimilars@health.gov.sk.ca
  - Call: 1-800-667-2549 (306-787-8744 in Regina), press option 2, then 3
- For clinical support from medSask:
  - Health-care providers:
    - Visit: medsask.usask.ca/professional-practice/biosimilars-in-Saskatchewan
    - Email: druginfo@usask.ca
    - Call: 1-800-667-3425 (306-966-6340 in Saskatoon)
  - Patients:
    - Visit: medsask.usask.ca/general-public/biosimilars-in-saskatchewan
    - Email: med.sask@usask.ca
    - Call: 1-800-665-3784 (306-966-6378 in Saskatoon)

Drug Plan and Extended Benefits

Enclosure

Transitioning To A Biosimilar: Assessment Of Unexpected Response

- **Biosimilars are demonstrated to be as effective and safe as the reference biologic. The unexpected response may not be related to the use of a biosimilar.**
- **When assessing an unexpected response: acknowledge and address patient concerns, use objective measures in addition to subjective information, and consider all potential factors.**

FACTORS	CONSIDERATIONS FOR REVIEW
Drug Storage **Deviations from manufacturer recommended storage may compromise efficacy.**	• Storage conditions ✓ Not exposed to temperature extremes (including during transport) ✓ Storage time at room temperature not exceeded ✓ Drug not expired
Drug Regimen **Non-adherence may lead to treatment failure resulting in unnecessary changes to or escalation of treatment.**	• Adherence ✓ Original reference biologic discontinued by patient ✓ Administered dose is the same as the reference biologic ✓ Dose given on time and as scheduled (i.e., no interruption of therapy)
Drug Administration **Improper use of the device could result in delivery of subtherapeutic dose.**	• Site of administration ✓ Appropriate and different from last site of administration • Dose delivery (as applicable) ✓ Plunger of prefilled syringe completely depressed ✓ Viewing window indicates complete drug delivery ✓ Autoinjector held in place at least 10 seconds ✓ Dose not accidently discharged (i.e., autoinjector button pressed too soon)
Drug Interactions **Concomitant medications or supplements may:** • **reduce efficacy of the biosimilar;** • **increase side effects; or** • **have side effects that mimic a disease flare.**	• New use of: ◦ Prescription medications ◦ Over-the-counter medications ◦ Supplements ◦ Samples ◦ Products ordered on the internet or purchased outside of Canada
Clinical Status Of Condition Being Treated	• Natural disease progression • Possibility of disease flare

FACTORS	CONSIDERATIONS FOR REVIEW

Other Therapies Used To Manage Condition	• Adherence or recent changes to:
	  • Concomitant medications
	  • Nonpharmacologic management (e.g. physical therapy, psychotherapy, diet, exercise, sleep/rest, etc.)

Overall Health Status	• Change in physical health including comorbid conditions, injury, or new diagnosis • Change in mental, emotional, social health (e.g. financial instability, work stress, access to care, etc.)
Nocebo Effect **Negative expectations may influence treatment outcomes.**	• Patient knowledge about biosimilars and sources of information • Patient anxiety about transitioning to the biosimilar • Health care provider confidence in the quality, safety, and efficacy of biosimilars

Managing Injection Site Pain

The transition to a different product may result in a change to how the injection feels. Consider:

- Product formulation factors: excipients, pH, volume, temperature, viscosity
- Device features: needle length and gauge
- Injection technique: injection speed and movement during injection
- Patient factors: low body weight, female sex, mental health status, disease severity, expectations of pain

Unexpected and severe adverse effects should be reported to Health Canada:

https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/medeffect-canada/adverse-reaction-reporting.html

Who to contact with questions or concerns:

- Saskatchewan Biosimilars Initiative: email sk.biosimilars@health.gov.sk.ca or call 1.800.667.2549 (306.787.8744 in Regina) and press option 2, then 2.
- medSask: email druginfo@usask.ca or call 1.800.667.3425 (306.966.6340 in Saskatoon)

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