



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Understanding Biologics

Biologic treatments can provide significant health improvements for people with many different medical conditions, including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, and inflammatory bowel disease, among others. Before using them, you should learn some things about risks and how you'll receive treatments. Reviewing this list of vocabulary and potential questions will help make the most of your time as you discuss treatment options with your clinician.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Biologic	A class of medical therapies that are manufactured from living organisms. They are different from traditional pharmaceutical medications. There are many different types of biologics which work in different ways.
Biosimilar	A particular category of biologic therapy. They work very similarly to an originally FDA-approved biologic therapy, and are often less expensive. Not all biologics have approved biosimilar products.
Contraindication	A medical situation in which a given therapy shouldn't be given. For example, some medical conditions are a contraindication to receiving certain biologic therapies.
Cytokine	An immune-signaling molecule, part of the immune system. Some biologics work by blocking the signaling of specific cytokines.
Hepatitis	Inflammation of the liver. This can be caused by infection with viruses like hepatitis B or hepatitis C. You may need screenings for these viruses before starting your therapy, since some biologics might cause dormant viruses to become reactivated.
Immunosuppression	A reduction in the body's ability to respond to certain kinds of infection. Some biologic therapies affect the immune system and may cause immunosuppression.
Infusion	A medication that is given via the bloodstream through a catheter inserted into a vein. Some biologic therapies are given through infusion at a medical facility or outpatient therapy center. Other types of biologics may be given via injection.
Live Vaccines	Vaccines which include some sort of component that is still living. For example, the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine is a live vaccine. Live vaccines are not safe to take for people on certain kinds of biologics.
TNF-blocker/ TNF inhibitor	One popular type of biologic therapy used for several different health conditions. This biologic therapy blocks the signaling of an immune molecule known as TNF (tumor necrosis factor).
Tuberculosis	An infectious medical condition that can affect the lungs and other organs. Some biologics have a risk of reactivating a tuberculosis infection that you might not know about, so some people need tuberculosis screening before starting their biologic.

