

Biologics to Treat Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Comparing Effectiveness, Safety, and Price

What is inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)?

IBD is a chronic condition that causes irritation and swelling (inflammation) in the digestive system. The most common types of IBD are Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. IBD develops when the immune system attacks the digestive system. Both types of IBD can cause diarrhea, pain, bleeding, and other serious side effects.

IBD is different from irritable bowel syndrome, which is a less serious condition.

How is IBD treated?

Treatment for moderate to severe IBD is usually steroids. Doctors also prescribe other drugs, called biologics. IBD can be treated, but not cured. Treatment can relieve symptoms, and it may keep IBD from getting worse.

What are biologics?

Biologics keep the immune system from attacking your digestive system as much. You can inject some biologics at home. Others are infused directly into a vein in a doctor's office.

Who needs biologics?

Some doctors start patients with biologics. But, usually, doctors suggest biologics when:

- Other medicines haven't worked for you or have stopped working.
- Steroids are risky for you because of your health.

How well do biologics work?

Biologics are fairly new drugs. They work quickly. There are six biologics approved to treat ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease. They seem to work equally well, but this can vary from person to person. If one doesn't work for you, you might want to try another.

The side effects of biologics

Mild side effects can include:

- Headache
- Skin reaction where the drug is injected
- Lung or urinary tract infections

Serious side effects are rare, but can include:

- Allergic reactions
- Liver damage
- Serious infections

The cost of biologics

Biologics for IBD are expensive. They cost about \$2,000 to \$5,000 a month* if you don't have insurance. If you have insurance, your coverage may limit your choices. If the drug you need isn't covered by your plan, you can check the drug's website for information on programs that provide the drug at no or low cost.

What to consider when choosing a biologic:

- How long is it likely to work?
- What are its side effects?
- How much does it cost?
- How often do you need to take it?

Our advice:

We compared cost, safety, and how well the biologics worked to treat Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. We chose this as our **Consumer Reports Best Buy Drug**:

 **Adalimumab** (Humira)

Humira can start to relieve symptoms within two weeks and can help for at least one year. It has been in use for 12 years so it has a longer track record than some biologics. And it may have a lower risk of side effects than other biologics. You can inject Humira at home.




Talk to your doctor about your IBD symptoms and how well your medication is working.

Biologics to Treat IBD: Comparison Chart

The Consumer Reports Best Buy Drug is in blue. We recommend this drug because it works as well as the other drugs, but may be safer.

Our analysis is based in part on an independent scientific review of the studies and research literature on therapies for Crohn's disease conducted by a team of physicians and researchers at Johns Hopkins University Evidence Based Practice Center.** This fact sheet is based on a more detailed report that you can find at www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org.†

Name	FDA-approved for Crohn's Disease	FDA-approved for Ulcerative Colitis	How it is given	How often
 Adalimumab (Humira)	Yes	Yes	Injection	Every other week
Certolizumab (Cimzia)	Yes	No	Injection	Once a month
Golimumab (Simponi)	No	Yes	Injection	Every 4 weeks
Infliximab (Remicade)	Yes	Yes	Infusion	Every 8 weeks
Natalizumab (Tysabri)	Yes	No	Infusion	Every 4 weeks
Vedolizumab (Entyvio)	Yes	Yes	Infusion	Every 4 or 8 weeks

* Prices for a drug can vary quite widely. The monthly costs we cite were obtained from a healthcare information company that tracks the sales of prescription drugs in the U.S. All the prices in this report are national averages based on sales in retail outlets only. They reflect the cash price paid for a month's supply of each drug in June, 2014.

** A synopsis of the EPC's analysis of biologic drugs forms the basis for this report. A consultant to *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs* who has no financial interest in any pharmaceutical company or product prepared the synopsis. The consultant also evaluated other independent, comprehensive systematic reviews and meta-analyses.

† The *Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs* methodology is described in detail in the Methods section at www.CRBestBuyDrugs.org.