

Biologic Therapy Risks and Benefits

What is Biologic Therapy?

Biologic therapy is a form of treatment that uses products known as biologics that are derived from living organisms. Biologic therapy is used to treat several types of illnesses like:

- Auto-immune diseases
- Asthma
- Nasal polyps
- Cancer
- Immune system disorders

The Uses of Biologic Therapy

The Benefits of Biologic Therapy

Biologic therapy works to prevent a series of reactions, i.e., the inflammatory process, before they can occur. As a result, inflammation is stopped before it can happen and cause symptoms. In comparison, conventional drug therapy treats the symptoms of inflammation; it doesn't prevent the inflammation from occurring in your body.

Some common illnesses that include the use of biologics are:

- Asthma
- Auto-immune diseases
- Atopic dermatitis/eczema
- Psoriasis
- Inflammatory bowel disease

The Risks of Biologic Therapy

The following conditions may make you unsuitable for biologic therapy:

- Anemia
- Low platelet count
- Ongoing or recurrent infections
- Abnormal platelet functions

A significant effect of biologics is an increase in the incidence of infections. As biologics work to change your immune system response, this can affect the way your body responds to illness, decreasing its innate ability to fight off an infection.

While biologic therapy is known for its high success rate, it may not be the correct type of treatment for some people, especially if you develop an allergic reaction. Symptoms can include:

- Chills
- Itchiness
- Redness
- Shortness of breath
- Full body rash
- Vision problems
- Swelling of hands and your face
- High and low blood pressure

Biologic therapy can also affect patients who have had prior hepatitis B or tuberculosis infections—biologics can sometimes re-activate the virus within your body.

Is Biologic Therapy Right for You?

The rate of success of biologic therapy depends on the patient in question and can vary from one individual to the next. For some patients, biologics can show a decrease in symptoms as early as one week after beginning treatment. Others may require several weeks before any changes are seen.

In addition, your immune system may decrease the effectiveness of a biologic agent after a particular period of time. When this occurs, you will begin to notice an increase in inflammation and other related symptoms—this happens as your body begins to develop antibodies that fight off the effects of the natural biologic substance.

If you experience autoimmune or inflammatory diseases like rheumatoid arthritis and Crohn's disease, or skin conditions such as psoriasis, talk to your doctor about whether biologics can work for you.