

Questions to ask your doctor

Asking your doctor to prescribe generic medications when they are available and appropriate is a smart way to cut down on your healthcare costs.

1. Is there a generic version of my medication?
2. Are generics right for me?
3. Are there any risks (side effects or reactions) if I change medications?

Questions to ask your pharmacist

1. Is there a generic version of my drug available?
2. Can I substitute my drug with the generic?
3. Will I have different side effects?
4. Does this generic look different than my brand-name medicine?
5. Are there any special instructions I should know about before I take this drug?

Glossary of terms:

Active ingredient

- ▶ The specific chemical ingredient that makes a drug work.

Brand-name drug

- ▶ The first approved version of a drug.

Generic drugs

- ▶ Equivalent versions of brand-name drugs approved for safety, efficacy, quality, and purity by the Food & Drug Administration.

Inactive ingredient

- ▶ Ingredients that are used only as additives for color, flavor, binding, or bulk.

This brochure should not replace advice from your physician, pharmacist, or other healthcare professional.

CONSUMER GUIDE TO GENERIC DRUGS



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- Safe
- Effective
- Affordable

THE FACTS ABOUT GENERIC DRUGS

Prescription drug costs are on the rise. Americans spent over 100 billion dollars on prescription drugs this year. One thing you can do to help control healthcare costs is to consider taking generic medications. Generics typically cost less than brand-name medications and are just as safe and effective. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulates all pharmaceuticals, including generics, and determines whether or not they are safe and effective.

This brochure has information to help you learn more about generic drugs and when they are right for you. Talk to your doctor and pharmacist to see if generic drugs are appropriate.

THE FDA MONITORS GENERIC DRUGS

The Food and Drug Administration works with pharmaceutical companies to assure that all drugs—both brand-name and generic drugs marketed in the U.S.—meet requirements for quality, strength, purity and potency. Generic drugs must contain the same active ingredients as their brand-name equivalents. They must also produce the same effect on the body as the brand-name counterpart.

What's the difference between a generic and a brand-name medication?

▶ A generic drug must contain the same active ingredients and must be equivalent in strength and dosage to the original brand-name product. While generics and brand-name drugs contain the same active ingredients, the inactive ingredients may be different. Inactive ingredients are used to keep a tablet from crumbling, add bulk to a tablet to make it large enough to handle, and/or provide a pleasant taste or color. Differences in inactive ingredients are generally harmless, but some people may have a reaction to them.

Are generic drugs safe and do they work as well as brand-name medicines?

▶ The FDA tests new generic drugs to ensure their safety and effectiveness. They make sure that generics contain the same amounts of active ingredients, that they are manufactured according to federal standards, and that they are released into the body at the same rate and the same way as the brand-name medicines.

Does a generic drug look different than its brand-name equivalent?

▶ It may be a different size, color and shape from the brand-name version.

Why would I want to choose a generic drug over a brand-name drug?

▶ By choosing a generic equivalent, you can save a significant amount of money and you won't compromise on quality. Generic equivalent medications typically cost 30 – 60% less than their brand-name counterparts.

SAVE MONEY WITH GENERICS!

If you have health insurance, check your plan. Some plans offer lower co-pays for generic drugs. If you have to pay for your medicines yourself, you may save 30-60 percent by using generics. Talk to your doctor to see if generics are right for you.

Why do generic medicines cost less?

▶ Generic drug manufacturers don't have to pay as much as brand-name drug manufacturers do for expensive research and development, sales, advertising and marketing.

Does every brand-name drug have a generic equivalent?

▶ No. About half of all prescription drugs have generic equivalents at this time. Generics can be manufactured only after patents on brand-name drugs have expired. There will be generic versions of many brand-named drugs available over the next few years, so be sure to talk to your physician or pharmacist and ask if a new generic equivalent is now available.

How do I get a generic drug?

▶ Ask your doctor if a generic option is available and if it is appropriate. Most pharmacists will be able to dispense the generic drug with your doctor's permission.

When should I not take a generic drug?

▶ Sometimes it is important to stay with the drug you're using, whether it's the generic or the brand name, because your body is used to it. You should always discuss any medication changes with your doctor.

What about side effects?

▶ Under the FDA's regulations, a generic drug must always be made with the same active ingredients as its brand-name counterpart. But that doesn't necessarily mean that a generic drug will be identical in every aspect to its brand-name equivalent. Because of the differences in inactive ingredients, you may have a reaction to your new medication. In most cases, however, your body will not react any differently. Your doctor should make the final decision about what's best for your health and medical treatment.