

GENERIC VERSUS BRAND MEDICATIONS

What are generic drugs?

A generic drug is a chemically equivalent, lower-cost version of a brand-name drug, costing 30-80% less! A brand-name drug and its generic version must have the same active ingredient, dosage, safety, strength, usage directions, quality, performance and intended use.

Are generic drugs as safe as brand-name drugs?

Yes. Generic and brand-name drugs must meet the exact same standards for effectiveness, safety and quality.

Are generic drugs as strong as brand-name drugs?

Yes. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires generic drugs to have the same quality, strength, purity and stability as their brand-name versions. Generic drugs are thoroughly tested to make sure their performance and ingredients meet the FDA's standards for equivalency.

Do generics take longer to work?

No. Generic drugs work in your body in the same way and in the same amount of time as brand-name drugs.

Are brand-name drugs manufactured in better facilities than generic drugs?

No. Both brand-name and generic drug facilities must meet the same standards; the FDA won't permit drugs to be made in substandard facilities. The FDA conducts about 3,500 inspections a year to ensure standards are met. In fact, brand-name firms are linked to an estimated 50% of generic drug production. They frequently make generic copies of their own or other brand-name drugs, then sell them with a generic name.

What is the price difference between generic and brand-name drugs?

In 2008, the average price of a brand-name drug was \$137.90, while the average generic prescription cost \$35.22, according to the National Association of Chain Drug Stores. In addition to the savings on the price difference, there is also a savings on your copayment for using a generic drug over a brand-name drug.

If generic drugs are just as good as brand-name drugs, why do generics cost less?

When a company develops a new drug and submits it for FDA approval, a 20-year patent is issued, preventing other companies from selling the drug during the life of the patent. As a drug patent nears expiration, any drug manufacturer can apply to the FDA to sell its generic version. Because these manufacturers didn't have the same development costs (such as years of expensive research), they can sell the drug at a discount. Once generics are allowed, the competition keeps the price down. Today, almost half of all prescriptions are filled with generics.

Why do some generic drugs look different from their brand-name versions?

All drugs have inactive ingredients such as dyes, fillers and preservatives. These ingredients often determine the size, shape and color of the drug. Trademark laws do not allow a generic drug to look exactly like its brand-name version. A generic drug must duplicate the active ingredient and it must be equally effective, but the color, shape, and other inactive ingredients may be different.

How do I get generic drugs?

Talk with your doctor and pharmacist. Explain that you want the most effective drug at the best price. Ask your doctor to write prescriptions for generic drugs whenever possible.

What's the bottom line on generics?

You can use generics with confidence. Although they may look different from their brand-name versions, generics are safe and effective. As always, any medication changes must be discussed with your physician and pharmacist.

References:

- www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/ucm167906.htm
- www.fda.gov/Drugs/default.htm
- www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm151180.htm
- www.nacds.org/wmspage.cfm?parm1=507