



UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE

Generic vs. brand drugs.

What is a generic drug?

Generic drugs have the same active ingredients and dosage as their brand-name counterparts. While the color, markings, or pill shape may look different, generics are just as safe and effective as brand drugs and treat your condition the same way. For a generic drug to be approved, it must meet the same quality standards as the brand drug.

Are generics as effective as the brand?

Yes. Generic drugs are required by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to have the same active ingredient, strength, dosage form, and route of administration as the branded product. The FDA ensures this via thorough testing and review.

How does a generic drug differ from a brand?

The major difference between a generic and brand drug is price. Most generics cost 70% to 90% less than the brand — saving consumers and health plans billions of dollars every year. While a generic drug may differ from a brand in terms of shape, color, or packaging, it only affects how the medicine looks, not how it works.

Why are generics cheaper?

Brand name drugs are often more expensive because there is not competition to drive prices down. Companies that make brand drugs often spend huge amounts on research, development, and advertising, so the drugs are priced higher to turn a profit. When patents on brand drugs near expiration, other companies can apply to the FDA to sell generic versions. Because generic manufacturers do not need to repeat costly clinical trials or incur expensive advertising costs, they're able to lower prices. The savings are then passed on to you in the form of lower copays.

How do I get generic drugs? Will my doctor prescribe them?

Generic substitution laws in the U.S. vary by state. Some states have mandatory laws where pharmacists will substitute a generic, when available, for a brand drug. Other states require your consent before substituting a generic for a brand. Doctors are more apt to prescribe generics because they are just as safe and effective as brands, but often more affordable.



If generic drugs are so great, why are brand name drugs prescribed at all?

By law, generic drugs cannot be sold until the brand drug's patent expires, which could take 10 years or more. Brands are prescribed in cases where generic versions are not yet available.

I've always received the generic version of my medication, so why did I get a brand?

Generic drugs are usually less expensive than brand drugs — but not always. When a new generic drug is first available, the generic can cost more than its brand counterpart. If you receive a brand drug, it is because it is the most cost-effective option for you and your plan. Down the road, if the generic becomes cheaper, you will be automatically switched back to lowest cost drug.



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