

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a generic drug?

A generic drug is a lower cost version of a brand-name medication. They are **just as safe and effective as the brand-name**, but they are more affordable.

How are generic drugs different from brand-name drugs?

The biggest difference between a generic and brand-name drug is the price. **Most generics cost 70-90% less than the brand-name version.** Generics drugs may also have a different shape, color or package. But these differences only affect how the medicine looks, not how it works.

How many people use generic drugs?

Millions of people use generic drugs every day. In fact, about 2 out of 3 prescriptions are for generic drugs. But there are still many people taking expensive brand-name drugs who could save a lot of money by switching to the generic version.

Are generics really the same as the brand-name?

Yes. Generic drugs have the same medicine as the brand-name, and the FDA will not approve them unless they are just as safe and effective as the brand-name drug. There are a few special medical conditions where a generic drug might have a small difference in how it works, but that is very rare.

Why are generic drugs so much cheaper than brand-name drugs?

Most drugs cost pennies to make. Brand-name drugs are more expensive because they don't have any competition to drive the price down. Also the companies that make brand-name drugs spend billions on advertising and must make a profit to succeed as a company and justify their spending.

Why did my doctor prescribe a generic drug?

Doctors know that generic drugs are just as effective as brand-name medicines and a lot more affordable. Doctors know that generics have a longer safety record, and therefore prescribe generics because they want their patient to have a drug that is safe, effective, and affordable.

If generic drugs are so good, why are brand-name drugs still prescribed?

Several reasons exist. For newer medicines, brand-names are prescribed because generic equivalents are not available yet. Generic drugs cannot be sold until the brand-name drug's patent ends, which may be 10 years or more. Some people insist on using expensive brand-name drugs because they do not understand that generics are just as safe and effective.



They think that “you get what you pay for” so a brand-name drug must be “better” because they cost more. However, this is not true – generics have the same medicine as the brand-name, and the reason generics cost less is because they only cost pennies to make. Advertising is another reason why people continue to use brand-name drugs over a more affordable generic. Brand-name drug companies spend billions on advertising every year to convince patients and doctors that their drugs are “better” than more affordable generic drugs. Generic drugs are not advertised, which helps keep their prices low.

Why should I take a generic drug if my doctor offers me free samples of brand name drugs?

Generic drugs are usually the most affordable option in the long-run. Some doctors offer free samples to patients to let them try a new medicine. Nonetheless, doctors can usually give free samples for a short period of time. It is usually better to start on a generic drug, which are often available for as little as \$4 a month, than to start on a brand-name and later have to pay a much higher price.

Do generic drugs cause more side effects than brand-name drugs?

No. Brand-name drugs and a generic drug have the same rates of side effects. Each medication can affect each person in a different way. If your medicine is causing side effects that you are worried about, call your doctor.

Why should I take generic drugs?

Because they are safe, effective, and affordable. If your medications cost too much, it is likely because of brand-name drugs. Many patients skip important medications rather than pay these high prices, putting their health at risk. With generic drugs, you can get the same health benefits at a lower cost.

What can I do to make sure that I get a generic drug?

- ↳ When your doctor talks to you about your medications, tell your doctor that you prefer generic drugs if they are available.
- ↳ If no generic exists for your particular drug, ask your doctor if there is another drug that is available as a generic that treats the same condition. Often, many drugs do the same thing – such as lowering cholesterol or preventing heart burn – but some will have generics while others will not.
- ↳ Ask your pharmacist whether generic drugs are available for your medicines. The pharmacist can check with your doctor, if necessary.



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