

Generic Drugs: An Opportunity to Save Without Compromise

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Generic medications are safe, effective, carefully manufactured and priced well below brand-name products. Given all of this, there is still a great deal of doubt regarding these medications. Many fear that they are simply not as good as brand-named products.

Why is there such controversy? The main source is a good deal of misinformation. This overview of generic medications will give you an appreciation for their role in your drug therapy.

Understand that while not all medications should be substituted with generics, at least 60 percent of prescriptions can be appropriately filled with generic products.

What is a generic medication?

A generic medication contains the same ingredient, in the same quantity and dosage form as the brand-name product. A generic drug goes through a comparable Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval process as a brand-name product. The generic must be bioequivalent to the brand-name product; the same amount of drug must get into the body to produce the same effect. Interestingly, data demonstrate that the variation between generic and brand-named products is generally no greater than the variation between different lots of the brand-name product.

Is the quality of a generic drug the same as a brand-name drug?

Quality remains a prime concern when considering generic medications. All medications, generic or brand, go through the same stringent assessment by the FDA. The manufacturing processes are controlled to the same degree. Packaging and storage are regulated in an identical manner. The quality is the same. In fact, brand-name companies manufacture over 55 percent of the generic products on the market.

How does the cost of a generic drug compare to a brand-name drug?

Generic drugs are less expensive; about 30 to 75 percent less; they are not cheap. Generic products are less expensive than their branded predecessors for several good reasons, including a much less expensive marketing approach, reduced need to recoup research and development investments and a significantly more competitive market place. Generic drugs must be sold for less because that is the only advantage they offer – all parameters being essentially equal, cost must be less.

The next time you are faced with beginning a round of drug therapy, ask your physician about the availability of a generic, and whether such a product is appropriate for your condition. Follow this with similar questions for your pharmacist, “Is the generic a good one – ‘A’ rated?” and “How much money will this save?” If your physician and pharmacist are comfortable with a generic substitution, you should consider it. You will pay a lower copay, and will get a good product at a good price.

If you want to learn more about generic medications, consult your family physician, or there is a wealth of information on the Internet. Type in “generic” and “drugs” and then go browsing.

