

QUESTION AND ANSWERS ABOUT GENERIC DRUGS

The *average* prescription cost of a generic drug is approximately **80% lower** than the *average* prescription cost of a brand name drug. Generic drugs offer a safe, clinically effective way to save on drug costs. The following are answers to commonly asked questions regarding generic drugs.

What is a generic drug?

A new drug is given two names. One is the brand name, which is what the manufacturer chooses to call the product. The other is the generic name, which is the name of the chemical compound of the drug. Every drug has a *generic name* to describe its active ingredient.

Why are most generic drugs less expensive than brand name products?

When a company develops a new drug, it has a patent for about 17 years. This patent protects the drug company's right to be the only manufacturer of that drug. After the patent expires, other companies can then manufacture and sell the drug under either a different brand name or the generic name. Because of lower research costs and more competition, the new product is usually sold at a lower price than the original brand name product.

Who manufactures generic drug products?

Many drug companies that manufacture brand name products also manufacture generic products. In fact, many drug companies that manufacture the brand name products also own the company that makes the generic version of their drug.

How are generic drugs approved for use?

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reviews all name brand and generic products for safety and effectiveness. Before a generic drug is approved for use in the United States, the drug company must provide proof to the FDA that the product has the same active ingredient when compared to the brand name product. In addition, the generic product must meet FDA standards for the amount of active ingredient and speed of absorption into the body. When the generic product meets these standards, it is considered equivalent.

Are generic drugs effective?

To gain FDA approval, a generic drug must have the same effect on the body as the brand name product. This means that the generic product must have the same active ingredient and must be the same strength. Sometimes, the generic drug may have a different color or shape than the brand name drug. This has no effect on the medical action of the drug; however, it does help to distinguish one product from another.

Are generic drugs safe?

The role of the FDA is to ensure that all new brand and generic drugs are safe and effective. The FDA also monitors reports from doctors, pharmacists, and nurses on adverse drug reactions. As with all drugs, brand and generic, some adverse reactions are possible.

When you have your prescription filled with a generic, you can be sure you are getting the quality medication you need at a better value.

If you would like additional information on generic drugs, feel free to visit the Food and Drug website at http://www.fda.gov/cder/consumerinfo/generics_q&a.htm.