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Facts About Generic Drugs

What are generic drugs?

A generic drug is the same as a brand-name drug in dosage, safety, strength, quality, the way it works, is taken and should be used.

Are generics as safe as brand-name drugs?

Yes. The Food & Drug Administration (FDA) requires all generic drugs to use the same active ingredients as brand-name drugs and work the same way. They have the same risks and benefits as the brand-name drugs.

Are generics as strong as brand-name drugs?

Yes. The FDA requires generic drugs to be the same quality, strength, purity and stability as its brand-name equivalent.

What is the best source of information about generic drugs?

Contact your doctor, pharmacist or other healthcare provider for information on your generic drugs. For more information, you can also visit the FDA website at: www.fda.gov/drugs.

Are brand-name drugs made in better factories than generics?

No. All factories must meet the same high standards. The FDA carefully monitors factories that produce all drugs.

Do generic drugs take longer to work?

No. Generic drugs are required to work in the same manner as their brand-name drug equivalent.

Why are generic drugs less expensive?

Manufacturers develop new drugs by investing in years of research and development, which is very expensive. Once the manufacturer's patent has expired for a drug, generic manufacturers can bring an equivalent drug to market without these costs. However, they must show that the product performs the same as the brand-name drug and all generic drugs are approved by the FDA.

If brand-name and generic drugs have the same active ingredients, why do they look different?

In the United States, trademark laws do not allow generic drugs to look like the brand-name drugs. However, the generic drugs must have the same active ingredients. Colors, flavors and appearance may be different but they do not affect the drug's effectiveness. The generic drug must perform the same as the brand-name drug and be approved by the FDA.

Does every brand-name drug have a generic?

No. Manufacturers of a new drug have a patent that prohibits generic versions of the drug for 17 years. This allows the manufacturer to recoup costs from the expensive research and development investment to create the drug. Generic versions of a new drug are only allowed after the patent has expired and the FDA has approved the generic.



Please contact your healthcare professional to determine if a generic drug is right for you.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

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