

# HEALTH IN OUR HANDS!

The Arkansas State University Wellness Program Newsletter  
[www.clt.astate.edu/wellness](http://www.clt.astate.edu/wellness)



## Generic Drugs

### Generic

When you hear the term “generic”, what initially comes to mind? Do you think less than, poor quality, or watered down? When generic is associated with medications, it may be assumed that the generic medication is not equivalent to the brand name. According to Webster, the term generic is defined as “relating to or characteristic of a whole group or class”. From this definition we can assume that generic drugs have characteristics of the brand name, but what characteristics do both medications share? The FDA states that generic medications are “copies of brand-name drugs and are the same as those brand name drugs in dosage form, safety, strength, route of administration, quality, performance characteristics and intended use”.

### FDA and Generic Drugs

The Food and Drug Administration is an agency that regulates food and drug safety for the United States. This administration is responsible for ensuring that all medications have been tested and choose

whether to approve or deny the distribution of the drug. When generic medications are manufactured, research is not performed to ensure the safety of the dosage form or ingredients. However, the FDA ensures consumers that “approved generic drugs have met the same rigid standards as the innovator drug”. I bet you’re wondering how could this be when no research has been performed, right? Well, before innovator drugs are distributed, animal and clinical research must prove that the drug’s content and dosage form are safe and effective. During the development, the drugs are under patent protection. This means that the company manufacturing the medication has the sole right to sell the product during the patent life. Once the patent expires, applications are sent to the FDA by manufacturers to vend generic forms of the innovator drug. For approval by the FDA, the generic drug has to meet the following guidelines:

- ✓ Identical active ingredients as original brand name drug

- ✓ Bioequivalent
- ✓ Same use indications
- ✓ Meet same requirements for purity, strength, quality, and identity
- ✓ Manufactured under the standards of the FDA’s good manufacturing practice regulations

Although generic drugs meet the rigid standards set by the FDA, variations will occur. These small differences in drug potency, purity, and size can be viewed as the down side of mass production. Generic drugs may differ from the innovator drug slightly; however, the level of variability is not considered medically important. The acceptable amount of variability for generic or brand name drugs is set by the Food and Drug Administration.

### Brand Name vs. Generic

From the content aforementioned, we know that generics must consist of the same active ingredients and serve the same purpose as their brand name counterparts. I’m sure you’re wondering what is the big difference, right?

Generics may not include the same inactive ingredients as the brand name drug, but the active ingredients are the same. Active ingredients are the most important part of medications because they provide the "pharmacological activity". These ingredients perform the work that the drug was designed to do; providing the therapeutic action. Inactive ingredients aid in the design of the medications (i.e. capsule, liquid, gel). In their generic form, drugs will be listed using the active ingredient. For example, Ibuprofen is the generic drug for Motrin.

Brand Name and generic drugs also differ in costs. According to the FDA "Generic manufacturers are able to sell their products for lower prices, not because the products are of lesser quality, but because generic manufacturers generally do not engage in costly advertising, marketing and promotion, or significant research and development". This price difference applies to prescription drugs as well as over-the-counter medications. Are you guilty of purchasing brand-name over-the-counter (OTC) medications assuming that they are of greater quality than the generics, but willing to purchase generic prescriptions? On average generic medications, whether OTC or prescription, are 80-85% lower in cost.

### **How to Determine If a Medication is Generic**

Over-the-counter generic medications can be found by searching for the active ingredient used by its brand name equivalent. For example, if you want to purchase the

generic drug for Motrin, you would read the label and find out what the active ingredient is. Once you find the active ingredient, Ibuprofen, you should find Ibuprofen on the shelves with the same dosage and intended use as Motrin. Prescription drugs can also be purchased in their generic form; be sure to inform the pharmacist that you would like to purchase the generic brand. The following are commonly used over-the-counter and prescription medications and their active ingredients:

- Zantac → Ranitidine Hydrochloride
- Excedrin → Acetaminophen; aspirin; caffeine
- Advil → Ibuprofen
- Claritin → Loratadine
- Tylenol → Acetaminophen
- Lexapro → Escitalopram oxalate
- Allegra → Fexofenadine Hydrochloride

If you're still unsure about which medication is the generic for a particular brand name drug, ask the pharmacist in the store. You could also do a search using the electronic Orange Book found on the FDA's website.

### **Affordable Medication**

To ensure that citizens can purchase medication at a reasonable price, pharmacies across the nation advertise saving opportunities. These retail pharmacies offer a flat rate for a 30 or 90 supply of generic medications. There are also savings club you can join to

receive discounts on medications if you do not have insurance. Listed are retail pharmacies and saving opportunities:

#### Kroger

\$4/30 day supply  
\$10/ 90 day supply

#### Target

\$4/ 30 day supply  
\$10/ 90 day supply

#### Walgreens

Walgreen Prescription Savings Club

- Individual membership \$20yr
- Family membership \$35yr

### **Sources**

1. [www.fda.gov/drugs](http://www.fda.gov/drugs)
2. [www.walgreens.com](http://www.walgreens.com)
3. [www.target.com](http://www.target.com)
4. [www.kroger.com](http://www.kroger.com)

\*\*If you have any suggestions for newsletter topics, please contact Dean Susan Hanrahan at [hanrahan@astate.edu](mailto:hanrahan@astate.edu).

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