

Fond Du Lac Human Services
Division Pharmacies



Medicine Talk

By Nicole Madsen

You all may notice that once in a while we substitute a generic medication for a brand name medication. We often get calls as to if the generic is as good as the brand name. I hope this article clears up any misunderstandings.

What is a generic drug?

A generic drug is a copy of a brand name drug and is the same in dosage, safety, strength, how it is taken, quality, performance, and intended use. In a nutshell, the two drugs are the same in all of the areas that matter.

How do generics differ from brand name drugs?

Differences between the two may occur in the shape, color, flavor and imprints. By law, no two medications can look alike; in order to abide by the legal standards, generic medications must look different than their brand name equivalents. These external differences do not affect the action of the medication itself. Since generic drugs look different, they often fool people into thinking they are not the same or not as strong as brand name medications. This is not the case.

Are generic drugs as safe as brand name medications?

The FDA (Food & Drug Administration) has standards in place to ensure generic medications are as safe and as effective as the brand name. Since generics use the same active ingredients and are shown to work the same way in the body, they have the same risks and benefits as their brand-name counterparts. Generic drugs are just as strong as brand name drugs.

Where are generic drugs made?

Both brand name and generic drugs are made in the same type of manufacturing plants. These plants must meet the standards of good manufacturing practices set forth by the FDA. It is estimated that manufacturers who also produce brand name medications make 50% of generic drugs. Manufacturers will frequently make copies of their own brand name medications but sell them under the generic name.

Why do we stock generic drugs in the pharmacy?

Generic drugs are significantly less expensive than brand name medications. All pharmacies dispense generic drugs when possible because the cost of a brand name medication can be several times that of the generic equivalent.

Our pharmacy stocks some brand name medications because not every brand name drug has a generic counterpart. Drug shortages may also dictate whether generic drugs are available.

Why are generic drugs less expensive?

After the patent expires on a brand name medication, other drug companies can introduce competitive generic versions after they have been thoroughly tested and approved by the FDA. Because these manufacturers don't have the same development costs, they can sell their products at substantial discounts. As soon as the FDA approves a generic medication, there is greater competition that results in a reduction in drug prices.

We aim to provide the highest standards of patient care. We only substitute medications when we know they are safe, effective and interchangeable. When we substitute a generic drug for a brand name drug we alert the patient as to the switch and offer an explanation. If a medication looks different to you, or you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to call the pharmacy - we are here for you.

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