**What is the difference between a generic and a brand-name medication?**

Not much, except for the name and price. Generic products contain the same active ingredients as brand-name (or “branded”) counterparts. However, generics can cost up to 60% less.

**Why do generic and branded medications have different names?**

Generic medications are identified by the chemical name. Branded medications typically have a unique, trademarked name (in addition to the chemical name) for marketing purposes.

**Newer, brand-name medications are better than older, generic medications, right?**

Just because it qualifies as “new” does not mean a medication is improved or works any better than its generic equivalent.

- Many newly approved medications are reformulations of older, generic products that are still effective. In most cases, those generics remain the standard of care because they have longer safety records than the newer, branded medications.
- **Price does not reflect quality** of generic or brand-name medications. Since generic medications generally cost much less, they are falsely considered inferior to their branded counterparts.

**Are brand-name medications made in more modern facilities than generics?**

No. Every facility (even those overseas) making pharmaceuticals for sale in the United States is inspected and approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Branded and generic medications must meet the same manufacturing process and quality standards.

In reality, companies that manufacture brand-name medications also produce about half of all generic medications sold. Often, those companies make copies of their own (or other) branded medications to sell as generic.

**Does the FDA review and approve generics the same way as branded medications?**

Yes. Before getting FDA-approval for distribution in the US, every generic medication must be proven generically and therapeutically equivalent to its brand-name counterpart:

- Generic medications must have identical active ingredients, strength, and dosage form (tablet, liquid, injection, etc.) as the branded product.
- Generics have to meet the same FDA specifications for quality, purity, and potency for the approved indications and conditions of use.

**Why do branded and generic medications look different?**

US trademark laws do not allow generic medications to look exactly like their brand-name counterparts. However, generic medications must duplicate the active ingredient. Colors, flavors and certain other inactive ingredients may be different.

**Do all brand-name medications have generic equivalents?**

No, some medications are protected by patent and can be manufactured only by the owner (or a licensed partner). After a patent expires, generic versions may be approved for sale, often at much lower prices. About 50% of all medications on the market are available in generic form.

**Why are generics less expensive than branded medications?**

Generic products do not have the initial investment for research, development, legal, marketing, and other business expenses required to create an entirely new medication. Without those upfront costs, generic medications can be produced—and sold—for substantially less.

**How can I get a generic medication?**

Request a generic medication when talking with your doctor about your prescription(s). And you can always remind your pharmacist that you want a generic rather than the brand-name medication before they fill your prescription.

*Continued*
How do I know if my prescription is a generic or brand-name medication?

To learn if a medication you take is classified as branded or generic, or get answers to other prescription questions, please call the phone number on the back of your Health Plan Member ID card. Our pharmacy representatives can access information from the FDA, pharmaceutical manufacturers, and even your local pharmacy if needed.

Will I be notified if my medication gets changed to a generic...or to a brand-name?

The pharmaceutical market is ever-changing, and many factors may cause a product to be reclassified. In addition, different pharmacies often receive generic medications from different sources. Unfortunately, it is not possible to anticipate which members will be affected by a change in medication classification.

You can verify if a prescription was reclassified by calling the phone number on the back of your Member ID card.

The Bottom Line

- The idea that “higher prices = higher quality” is not true for pharmaceuticals. Generic medications meet the same quality standards as brand-name medications.
- Many newly approved medications are minor reformulations of generic products that are older, but still effective.
- Generic medications have longer clinical safety records compared to newer, branded medications.
- For most plan members, generic medications provide the best overall value.

Note: Since many medication options are available, our physicians and pharmacists developed this ConsumerRx to provide you with information about the available alternatives, as well as potential advantages and lack of advantages of the various products. This medication summary was developed based upon an evaluation of information from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), scientific studies, and input from practicing doctors and specialists.