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Generic Prescription Drugs – The Same Quality and BIG Savings

It is often assumed that well-known name brand medicines reflect a higher level of quality than generic products in today's consumer-driven culture. Many believe that when you pay more for a "designer" name, you expect a superior product. However, prescription drugs are different from general consumer products. In the case of prescription medicine, the standards of quality are the same for brand names and generic medicines – the generic drug is just as safe and effective as the brand name medicine. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) makes sure of it.

When the patent on a brand name medicine expires, other drug manufacturers can make and sell the same medicine. This same medicine is sold under its chemical, or "generic", name. Like their brand name counterparts, all generic medicines are tested and approved by the FDA before they can be sold to consumers.

FDA approved generic medicines are just as safe and effective as brand name medicines.

To be sure, a catchy name may do a better job of helping promote a new drug than its chemical name. Zantac sounds friendlier than "ranitidine HCl." Dyazide is easier to say than "hydrochlorothiazide" and "triamterene." But the power of a medicine lies in its chemical formulation, not in the name. The generic version works just like the brand name drug in dosage, strength, performance, and use, and must meet the same quality and safety standards. All generic drugs must be reviewed and approved by the FDA. Most importantly to you, the consumer, research shows that plan participants **can save an average of 30% to 80%*** when they fill their prescriptions with a generic drug instead of a brand name drug.

How much money can you save?

To determine how much money you can save on generics, compare your generic co-pay or cost share to the brand co-pay/cost share... then multiply the difference by how many prescriptions you might need per year. This will give you an idea of how much you can save per year by choosing generics.

The perception that the substantial cost savings between a generic and its equivalent brand is based on a difference in safety, effectiveness or quality is simply not true. A generic medicine may be a different color or shape, but every generic drug is put through a rigorous, multi-step review process by the FDA that includes a review of scientific data on the generic drug's ingredients and performance.

So, why do generic medicines cost less?

Generics cost less because their manufacturers do not have to spend the hundreds of millions of dollars it takes to complete research and development on the new, original medicine. The brand manufacturer makes that investment, along with the millions of dollars needed to market and advertise the new medicine. Therefore, it costs the generic manufacturer less to develop the same medicine. The savings are passed on to you!

Good news for all of us!

According to the Congressional Budget Office, consumers who use generic drugs are saving an estimated \$8 to \$10 billion a year.¹ This trend will only gain strength as another \$56 billion in brand name drugs are expected to lose patent protection through 2008. We can all do our share to keep healthcare costs down, and choosing generic medicines whenever possible is one of the easiest and smartest ways to do so.

To improve your financial well-being, save on prescription medicines by looking beyond the brand name and choosing a generic. Talk to your doctor to see if a generic medicine is right for you. Ask your doctor to prescribe generics and to allow generic substitution at the pharmacy, as appropriate. Remember, you can Count on Generics for the same brand quality at a lower cost.

1. www.fda.gov

*The amount of your savings will be based on your benefit plan. Source: Generic Pharmaceutical Association's Web site: www.gphaonline.org

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