



EMPOWERED TO LIVE WELL

Know the Difference

BRAND NAME vs. GENERIC

Make informed choices regarding your health

Understanding Brand Name Drugs vs. Generic Drugs

Navigating the world of pharmaceuticals can be overwhelming, especially when choosing between brand name and generic drugs. Both types of medications are important in healthcare and offer similar efficacy. This leaflet aims to provide clarity on their characteristics, helping you make informed decisions about your prescriptions.



Brand Name Drugs

Brand name drugs are often the first version of a medication introduced to the market. A brand medication is the “innovator” or pioneer, and is developed by a pharmaceutical company with patent and exclusivity protection. This prevents generic drugs from competing right away. The innovator brand does extensive research and development and usually has a well-established reputation.

Generic Drugs

Generic drugs are essentially copies of brand name medications, produced after the original patent expires. They have the same active ingredients and work in the same way, but may look different and contain different non-active ingredients. Generic brands utilize the research from the innovator brand to develop their versions. These medications must meet the quality, strength, and purity standards as brand medications, so they have the similar benefits and effects.

COMPARISON OF FEATURES

BRAND NAME	FEATURES	GENERIC DRUGS
No difference	Active Ingredient	No difference
Tested and approved by FDA	Inactive ingredients	May differ - but proven acceptable by the FDA
Higher cost	Price	Lower cost
No difference	Strength/dosage	No difference
Drugs are standard in size, colour, packaging, etc	Appearance/Look	Packaging and drug itself may look different
Covered if no generic exists or at higher copay rate	Insurance coverage	Usually always covered

US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Guidelines

According to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Generic drugs are formulated to work like their brand name counterparts. A generic drug approved by the FDA must:

- Have the same active ingredients as the brand name drug. Active ingredients make the drug effective for a particular disease or condition. For example, atorvastatin calcium is the active ingredient in the cholesterol treatment Lipitor.
- Have the same strength, dosage form, route of administration, and conditions of use as its brand name counterpart. If the brand name drug is a capsule and is taken orally, for example, the generic must also be a capsule taken orally.
- Treat the same diseases or conditions.

Generic drugs also must be “bioequivalent” to their brand name counterpart. That means the generic drug gets to the part of the body where it works in the same time and in the same amount as the brand name counterpart.



Just like brand name medicines, generic drugs must meet the same high quality and manufacturing standards. These requirements, among others, enable the FDA to ensure that when patients take a generic medicine, it is an appropriate substitute for its brand name counterpart.

The FDA also states, that there will always be a slight, but not medically significant, level of expected variability—just as there is for one batch of brand-name medicine compared with the next batch of brand-name product. This variability can and does occur during manufacturing, for both brand-name and generic medicines. When a medicine, generic or brand-name, is mass produced, very small variations in purity, size, strength, and other parameters are permitted. **FDA limits how much variability is acceptable.**

Switching from Brand to Generic Drugs

As the innovator, Brand medications invest heavily in research and development. Pharmaceutical companies utilize this research to create the generic counterparts. This allows Generic drugs to be a more cost-effective option. If you are using brand medications and opt to use the generic version, there are recommendations to consider before making the switch.

- Always check with your healthcare provider or your pharmacist.
- Pay keen attention to your response to the medication, as you would with any new medication.

Most persons will not experience any real difference between brand and generic medications. However, be alert and make note of any abnormal or prolonged negative reactions. If these persist, speak with your pharmacist or medical provider as soon as possible.

Additional Resources

For additional information about the generic approval process or to check if there is a generic version of your medicine, please visit the US Food and Drug Administration Website, **FDA.gov**

The Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW) through its Standards and Regulations Division also assesses and approves drugs that are sold in Jamaica to ensure that generic drugs meet a certain quality standard.

To learn more about Medication Therapy Management and how Sagicor Life can support you, visit the **Sagicor Wellness Hub** at [sagicor.com](https://www.sagicor.com).

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