

# GENERIC MEDICINES

## What are generic medicines?

Generic versions of medicines can be manufactured and sold by other pharmaceutical companies once the original drug's patent expires.

- Generic medicines are versions of branded medicines made by other companies.
- Drug companies research and produce new medicines. These medicines have a “brand name” (or trade name), and a “generic name” (drug name).

For example, paracetamol is the generic name for a widely used pain killer. “Panadol®” is the name one company gives to its own brand of paracetamol.

## Are generic medicines as good as branded medicines?

All generic companies are subject to tight controls on the quality of their medicines. In fact, many of them are owned by companies who also make branded medicines.

## Do generic medicines look different?

Generic medicines may look different from their branded equals. They may also look different from other generic forms of the same medicine. They may differ in colour, shape, size and even taste. However, they will have the same effect on the body.

## Should my doctor prescribe all my medicines by generic name?

No. Sometimes your doctor may want you to stick to one branded product.

An example of this would be when you are taking tablets and capsules that have special coatings or a particular controlled release mechanism. For some medicines, such as insulins, it is safer to prescribe by brand name.

Sometimes the same medicine can be provided at a lower cost to the NHS by using a specific brand of medicine rather than being prescribed by its generic name.

## Why do we use generic medicines?

They are just as effective as branded medicines. They are often less expensive and can save the NHS millions of pounds. The savings made pay for improvements in NHS care for you and other patients.

## Will my medicine have a different name and look different?

It might, but your doctor or pharmacist will only change you to a generic version if it's safe to do so. If anything about your medicine looks unfamiliar, it's always okay to check with your doctor or pharmacist.

## Summary

Generic medicines often cost a lot less than their equivalent branded medicine.

The use of generic medicines saves the NHS millions of pounds compared to using expensive branded medicines.

This is without reducing the quality of the treatment that patients get.

Generic medicines are NOT less effective than branded medicines.

Generic medicines may look different BUT they are safe and effective.

Making changes to your medicines does not mean that you are receiving a reduced quality care.

**Find out more**

If you have any questions about generic medicines, ask your GP or pharmacist (chemist).

The NHS website at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) has lots of medicines related advice.