



# What the doctor ordered

A guide to understanding your doctor's prescription decisions

## Brand-name and generic medications— what you should know

### Talk to your doctor about which is right for you

Depending on the medication, your doctor may want to treat you with either a brand-name drug or a generic alternative. Doctors often prescribe branded drugs based on their clinical experience, your health insurance formulary, and other important factors. Other times, he or she may recommend a generic as a cost-effective substitute when a therapeutic substitute is available.

### A generic alternative is not always available

That's why it's important to understand your doctor's decision. By working with your doctor, you can make sure you get the medicine that's best for you.



## GENERIC MEDICATIONS

- Are **intended for the same uses** as brand-name drugs
- Contain the **same active ingredients** and should be **taken in the same way**
- Should deliver the **same safety, quality, and performance** when taken in the same dosage and strength
- May contain **different inactive ingredients**
- In certain instances, may be marketed by other drug companies **when the brand patent expires**
- May be a **different color and shape** from the brand-name drug
- **May not be available** for your brand-name drug

# Your healthcare begins with you

## AT YOUR DOCTOR'S OFFICE



When it comes to your health, it's important for you to become your own advocate. Your doctor made his or her prescription decision, specifically, with your health in mind. Follow these steps to ensure that you understand your doctor's decision:

- 1 UNDERSTAND** what your insurance plan covers for prescription drugs, and confirm whether your doctor prefers that you receive the brand-name version of the prescribed drug or a generic alternative.
- 2 CHECK YOUR PRESCRIPTION** to determine if your doctor has written a brand name on it and ensure that is what he or she prefers that you receive.
- 3 ASK** if your doctor wrote "medically necessary," "may not substitute," or "dispense as written" on the prescription. This requires the pharmacist to check with you and your doctor before making any medication switches.

### Work with your doctor to get the right prescription

When your doctor prescribes a medication, it is because he or she feels that it is the right one for you.

Use these questions to help you discuss your medications with your doctor, and write down anything you want to make sure you remember.

- Q.** What is the **name and purpose** of each medication?
- Q.** Is it OK to accept a **generic version** of any of my medications?
- Q.** What medications would you prefer that I receive **only** as the brand-name versions?
- Q.** Should I take my medication at the **same time each day**?
- Q.** Should I take my medication **with or without food**?
- Q.** Are there certain foods I should **avoid** while taking these medications?
- Q.** If you wish for me to take a brand-name medication, how can I **ensure** that I receive what is intended for me at the pharmacy?
- Q.** Can you direct me to **co-pay cards or programs** that will help reduce or even eliminate the cost of my prescription?
- Q.** Whom should I contact if I pick up my **prescription on a weekend** and discover it's not what you prescribed?

# Your healthcare begins with you

## AT THE PHARMACY



In most cases, pharmacists or pharmacy personnel are not required to tell you or your doctor if they decide to suggest a generic alternative for the brand-name drug.

Retail and mail-order pharmacies in many states are permitted—and are sometimes required—to fill all prescriptions with generic alternatives.

**Automatic substitutions of generics for brand names may occur** unless your doctor specifies that only the brand-name drug should be dispensed. You can also tell your pharmacist if you prefer the brand-name drug.

### YOUR MEDICATION CHECKLIST

- Open the container** before you leave the pharmacy or as soon as you get your mail-order shipment.
- Make sure that you have received the **correct dosing strength(s)**; some medications come in different strengths.
- Match the shape, color, writing, and dosing strength** you receive to your last prescription if this is a refill.
- Check the label** to make sure it reads exactly as your doctor prescribed. If anything is different, or if you are uncertain whether you received the correct prescription, immediately contact your physician and your dispensing pharmacist as necessary.
- You have the right to tell your pharmacist** that your doctor intends for you to have the brand-name drug that he or she prescribed.

**CONSIDER CONSULTING with the brand-name drug manufacturer or your pharmacist about support or co-pay programs, which may reduce the overall medication cost. Many manufacturers also offer indigent care programs for qualified patients, allowing them to receive brand-name drugs at minimal or no cost.**