

Managing Costs with Generic Drugs

Know the Basics So You Can Save

With the cost of prescription drugs continuing to rise, now is a great time to consider generic drugs. Through the first half of 2020, more than 89 percent of prescriptions for our members were filled with a generic medication.

Generic Drugs Mean Lower Cost, Not Lower Quality

Many people worry that generic drugs are not as good as brand-name drugs. But they aren't like "generic" soaps or canned goods, which might actually taste or work differently. FDA-approved generic drugs are just as safe and strong as the corresponding brand-name drugs—the FDA requires it. The FDA has standards for strength, quality, purity and potency that all approved generic drugs must meet. Generic drugs must also have the same active ingredients as their brand-name counterparts so you get the same medical benefit. Plus, manufacturing, packaging and testing sites for generic drugs have to pass the same quality standards as those of brand-name drugs. In fact, generic drugs and their brand-name counterparts are sometimes made in the same manufacturing plants. Think of generics as "tried and true"—they have been prescribed for many years, and doctors know them well.

Today, generic drugs are available to treat many common conditions such as asthma, heartburn, high cholesterol and even specialty conditions such as multiple sclerosis and cancer. Every year, more and more widely prescribed and well-known brand-name drugs become available as generics and, in some cases, become available over-the-counter (OTC) with no prescription necessary.

It's important to ask your doctor for a generic drug when one is available instead of always opting for the brand-name drug. Buying a generic drug can lower both your costs (such as your copays or coinsurance) and your employer's costs, if your prescription drug benefit coverage is provided by your employer.

Generic Drugs Work the Same

While trademark laws do not allow a generic drug to look exactly like a brand-name drug, according to the FDA, a generic must contain the same active ingredients as the original brand-name medication. FDA-approved generic drugs are considered identical to their brand-name counterparts in terms of dose, strength, safety, effectiveness, intended use and how you take them, though their colors, and inactive ingredients may be different. In most cases, generic drugs become available once the patent protections given to the original manufacturer have expired.

Generic Drugs Cost Less

Prescription drug plan designs often emphasize generic drugs because they cost less than brand-name drugs. When generic drugs become available, the competition they bring often leads to substantially lower prices. Generic drugs are also less expensive because the companies that make them did not initially have to develop or advertise them. Plus, there may be multiple manufacturers making the same generic drug.

Cost-Saving Opportunities

Medical Mutual® partners with Express Scripts, our pharmacy benefit manager, to offer combined medical and prescription drug solutions to members. To help you find cost-saving opportunities for any prescription drugs you might be taking, simply log in to My Health Plan at MedMutual.com/Member. Click on “Prescription Drug Benefits” under the Benefits & Coverage tab, then click the “Sign on to Express Scripts” button. After you are securely redirected to the Express Scripts website, click on “Prescriptions.” Then click “Price a Medication” and enter the name of your medication. Express Scripts will provide cost-saving opportunities specific to your medications and your prescription drug plan, including brand-to-generic and/or retail-to-mail options.

Express Scripts will show you how much you could potentially save with an alternative medication (including generics if available) or an alternative delivery method such as mail order (if available through your plan). Your doctor can review your options and, as appropriate, write a new prescription for you. In addition to My Health Plan, members who have a mobile device¹ are able to download an app that allows access to this same information.

Example: Cost Comparison for Member with \$10 Generic Copay

You need to fill a prescription for Strattera® to help treat attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD). You can fill a 30-day prescription of brand-name Strattera or its generic equivalent, atomoxetine, at a participating retail pharmacy. Your plan includes the following copays for each 30-day supply²:

MEDICATION	YOU PAY	LOWER-COST CHOICE	YOU PAY	YOU SAVE
<input type="radio"/> Strattera 10mg capsule (brand) Dosage: 1 capsule, once a day Pharmacy: Retail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coverage rules may apply ▪ How is my cost determined? 	\$3,000.00 per year \$250.00 for 30 days	<input checked="" type="radio"/> atomoxetine 10mg capsule (generic equivalent) Dosage: 1 capsule, once a day Pharmacy: Retail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coverage rules may apply ▪ How much does my plan pay ▪ Compare drug information 	\$40.00 per year \$10.00 for 90 days	\$2,960.00 per year <small>► Explain my savings</small> <div style="border: 1px solid #00a651; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; margin-top: 10px;"> View other alternatives </div>
Savings per year:				\$2,960.00

Important Questions for Your Doctor and Pharmacist

Ask your doctor...

- Are generic drugs available to treat my condition(s)?
- Are generics the best choice?
- Are there any risks in changing to a generic drug?

Ask your pharmacist...

- Are generics available for any of my medications?
- How much can I save if I use a generic?
- Are there any concerns about side effects?

¹ Supported devices include most iPhone®, Android™ and Blackberry® devices

² Your costs will vary based on your plan.