



Many companies have samples, assistance programs, voucher cards, and free 30 day supplies for branded prescription drugs.

# GENERIC MEDICATIONS Are They Right For You ?

By NARENDRA SINGH, MD, FRCP(C), FACC, FAHA

Generic medications are drugs that have been approved by the FDA as being 'equivalent' to the original brand name medication. They tend to be considerably less expensive. As the cost of healthcare rises the push to use generic medications increases both from a patients perspective and from your insurance company.

The following are some points I want you to consider when choosing generic medications.

- The FDA considers a generic medication 'equivalent' to the branded medication if it is at least 80% of the strength to as much as 125% of the strength. It is therefore very important to ensure that your pharmacy provide you with the same generic company each time. If not, you can have significant fluctuation in your drug dosage and drug effect.
- Generic meds use different fillers than branded meds. This is usually not an issue unless you have a lot of gastrointestinal sensitivities.
- For some medications there is no true generic equivalent. In such cases you must stay with the branded product until you discuss with your doctor any cost implications.
- For some medications the 'branded' product has additional benefits beyond the generic option. In such cases a discussion with you doctor will allow you to make the best and most informed choice for yourself.
- Be careful about purchasing any drugs from abroad. While drugs from real Canadian pharmacies are generally safe, the same cannot be said for drugs from India, China and Mexico.

- While generic medications are regulated by the FDA, over-the-counter (OTC) supplements are not. It is best to consult a naturopath before using OTC supplements. OTC supplements should complement rather than replace prescription drugs. Always keep an updated list of your medications including supplements and bring to each office visit. This will help reduce the risk of overmedicating and potential drug interactions.
- Do not stop any medication without notifying your physician. In general physicians will always opt to prescribe the best treatment for you, however if it is not affordable, we will work with you to determine reasonable alternatives
- Many companies have samples, assistance programs, voucher cards, and free 30 day supplies for branded prescription drugs. There are no samples for generic meds but some stores offer these drugs for FREE with a prescription.

From a cardiologist perspective its nice to know that we now have a wide variety of generic medications to help prevent future progression of heart disease relatively inexpensively !



*Dr. Narendra Singh, MD FRCPC FACC FAHA studied at the Dalhousie Medical School in Halifax Nova Scotia and went on to complete a residency and cardiology fellowship at the University of Toronto. He is the Director of Clinical Research at Atlanta Heart Specialist.*