

Most generics just as good as brands

I've always thought generic drugs were bad until I had to take some myself. I feel the same, and I'm saving money. Please tell your readers how good generics are.

J.S., Washington, D.C.

Generics are usually just as good, but once in a while you hear about a generic company that fudged its paperwork. Then consumers assume that all the generic manufacturers are liars, which is simply not true. For the record, generic drugs are identical copies of their brand counterparts, with the same performance, chemical name, strength and dosing.

It's confusing because brand-name drugs look different from generics. U.S. trademark laws won't allow a generic drug to look exactly like its brand-name counterpart, so colors, flavors and inactive ingredients are different. None of that matters as long as the generic drug duplicates the active ingredient to exact specifications. This means generic drugs carry the same risks and benefits as the brand.



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The Food and Drug Administration also mandates generics to keep the same quality, strength, purity and stability as brand-name drugs. Because generic drugs are FDA-approved, they have to be deemed "safe and effective" just like their brand counterparts.

A popular myth is that generics are produced in less than modern facilities. That's not true; brands and generics are produced by similar good manufacturing processes. The FDA won't permit any drug to be made in substandard labs. What's fascinating is that brand-name companies produce about 50 percent of generics, and guess what else? Brand-name manufacturers often copy their own drug and resell it as a generic.

Generics are less expensive, even though pharmacies profit

more from them. I say, so what! Consumers shouldn't care what profit the pharmacy pulls in as long as they pay less out of pocket. Generics cost less, period. When a brand-name drug goes off patent, its secret formula becomes public and is no longer protected by law. When that happens, generic manufacturers are allowed to copy the drug formula without having to pay those initial investment costs of research, development, advertising, promotion and patent expenses. Think of it this way: If you buy a brand-name drug, it's like paying for the generic chemical and putting an exorbitant tip in the jar.

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