

# Changing from Branded to Generic Medicines



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is a generic medicine?

A generic medicine is the same as its branded medicine equivalent and contains the same active ingredient.

For example, **Lipitor**, the brand name, is also known by its generic name **atorvastatin**.

**Atorvastatin** is the generic name for **Lipitor**. As a generic equivalent, **atorvastatin** has exactly the same medicinal substance in it as **Lipitor**.

Some branded medicines do not have generic equivalents.

### What is a branded medicine?

The brand name is given to a medicine by the pharmaceutical company it is developed by. If more than one company make the medication there may be several brand names.

For example, **Lipitor** is a brand name for a well-known medicine to reduce cholesterol.

Pharmaceutical companies usually invest significant amounts of money (which can be as much as 1 billion pounds) in developing new medicines. It usually takes between 20 – 25 years before other companies are allowed to copy the drugs the pharmaceutical companies have developed.

### Why is generic prescribing being promoted?

Generic prescribing by your doctor is a more cost-effective use of limited NHS funds. The cost of a generic medicine is generally LESS than its branded equivalent. Sometimes the difference is significant - up to 80% less. In Guildford and Waverley generic prescribing could save an estimated £180,000 which could be spent in other areas of the NHS.

Use of a medicine's generic name is also good prescribing practice. Your dispensed medicine will then also be labelled by its generic name. The name on the pharmacy label will be a reminder to you of the official active ingredient that you are taking.

## **Are there any differences between a branded medicine and an equivalent generic medicine?**

The main differences are *appearance, cost and packaging*.

If you have any concerns or doubts, please ask your GP and/or your pharmacist for advice.

Generic medicines go through the same detailed safety and quality requirements as the original branded product. You WILL NOT be prescribed a generic medicine that is not the same quality as its branded equivalent.

## **Is a change to a generic medicine alternative always possible?**

There are some circumstances where it is important to continue to take a branded medicine you have been prescribed. Your GP or pharmacist can advise you. They know about your medicines and whether you can, or cannot, change to a generic medicine equivalent.

## **What if I still want to be prescribed a branded medicine?**

You will have the option to request a private prescription for your medicine. The private prescription will be written with its generic name and you will be able to request the pharmacy to supply the branded version. You will be required to pay the full cost of the medicine and it is advisable to check with the pharmacy the cost before getting the prescription dispensed. Please do carefully consider whether the total cost is going to be worthwhile for you personally.

### **Remember, generic medicines:**

- have the **same active ingredient** as branded medicines
- meet the **same standards** as branded medicines
- are as **safe and effective** as branded medicines

