



## Save on prescription drug costs – choose generic over the brand name

### GENERIC DRUGS – GOOD FOR YOU, GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH PLAN

You like to save money whenever you can, right? As with other products and services, being a smart consumer also applies to prescription drugs. You may not be aware of this, but generic drugs are typically less expensive than the brand name. That means you could have an opportunity to save the next time you visit the pharmacy to have a prescription filled. Both you and your health plan will reap the rewards!

### REQUEST GENERIC DRUG ALTERNATIVES AND SAVE

Prescription drugs are generally the most costly element of any health care plan – and these costs continue to soar as drug use increases and new, more expensive drugs are introduced into the marketplace. The next time you need to have a prescription filled, talk to your doctor about prescribing a generic alternative instead of the brand. Or when you are at the pharmacy counter, ask your pharmacist if a generic equivalent is available instead of the brand name drug.\* You can take charge of how your prescription drug money is spent just by asking a few simple questions. The savings will add up – for you, your wallet and your drug plan.

### WHAT IS A GENERIC DRUG?

'Generic' is the term used to describe a drug product that is equivalent to a brand name drug. Pharmaceutical manufacturers are allowed to produce and sell generic drugs after the patent on the brand name drug has expired. Even then, Health Canada<sup>1</sup> must approve the generic drug before it can go to market. When applying to sell a generic equivalent of a brand name drug, manufacturers must prove their product equals the brand name drug. The active ingredients must be as pure. It has to dissolve in the same manner and it must be absorbed at the same rate as the brand name drug. According to Health Canada, generic drugs have the same active ingredients and are identical to brand name drugs in dose, strength and how they are taken. They are equally safe and effective. The only difference in make-up is their inactive ingredients - the binders, fillers and dyes used to give the drugs their shape and colour. These differences have no effect on the drug's active ingredients or how it works. Despite what you may think about some other generic products – generic drugs are not lower quality than brand name drugs! In fact, Health Canada requires drug manufacturers to perform tests, both during and after production, to show that every drug batch made meets their requirements for that product. Of course, one of the best things about generic drugs is the price – which is usually substantially lower than the brand name drug.\*

\*Not all brand drugs have a generic equivalent but it is worth asking the question. In some cases, generic drugs are not cheaper than the brand version. Ask your pharmacist about the least costly alternatives.

<sup>1</sup> Health Canada, "THE SAFETY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF GENERIC DRUGS", <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>

## COST COMPARISON – BRAND NAME VS. GENERIC DRUG\*

To show you how much costs can vary, here's an example of one of the top-selling prescription drugs on the market today. It's the cholesterol-lowering brand name drug Lipitor and Atorvastatin the new, low cost generic equivalent:

	Brand name (Lipitor)	Generic (Atorvastatin)	Total Savings
One month supply	\$85.09	\$46.31	<b>\$38.78</b>
Three month supply	\$231.29	\$114.95	<b>\$116.34</b>

This example is based on 100% drug coverage with a dispensing fee of \$11.99. In this scenario, the savings help to keep your plan costs low. If your plan requires you to pay a percentage of the prescription cost (known as co-insurance or co-pay) – the difference could be money in your pocket!

For instance, if your plan covers 80% of prescription costs and you are responsible for the balance (20%) as shown below, you could save up to \$23.27 by purchasing a three-month supply of the generic drug:

Three month supply	Brand name (Lipitor)	Generic (Atorvastatin)	Total Savings
Total drug cost (includes one dispensing fee of \$11.99)	\$231.29	\$114.95	
Your plan pays 80%	\$185.03	\$91.96	<b>\$93.07</b>
<b>You pay 20%</b>	<b>\$46.26</b>	<b>\$22.99</b>	<b>\$23.27</b>

## WHY A THREE-MONTH SUPPLY?

When a drug is taken on a regular basis, physicians often prescribe a three-month supply. That's a good thing because you'll pay only one dispensing fee instead of three. And, don't forget the time you'll save by reducing the number of trips you have to make to the pharmacy for monthly refills.

## DOES YOUR PLAN HAVE GENERIC SUBSTITUTION?

Many drug plans only cover the cost of the lowest cost alternative product. If yours is a generic substitution plan, you will be responsible for the cost difference between the brand and the generic medication. By choosing a generic drug, your potential to save money can even be more dramatic!

Generic substitution Three month supply	Brand name (Lipitor)	Generic (Atorvastatin)	Potential savings to you:
Total drug cost (includes one dispensing fee of \$11.99)	\$231.29	\$114.95	↓
Your plan pays 80% of the lowest cost alternative	\$91.96	\$91.96	
You pay the balance	<b>\$139.33</b>	<b>\$22.99</b>	

## PREVENTION IS ALWAYS THE BEST MEDICINE!

Being a smart consumer is one thing, but making healthy lifestyle choices is one of the best ways to improve wellness and reduce drug costs. The steps you take today may reduce the medications you require later on in life. The great thing is – it's never too late to start. For tips, tools and information to help you make healthier lifestyle choices, check out Health eLinks® on our Plan Member Secure Site at [www.manulife.ca](http://www.manulife.ca).

\*Examples and pricing are based on the Ontario market. Prices are subject to change and regional differences may apply.

**For more tips on being a smart prescription drug consumer, check out DrugSmart at [www.manulife.ca/groupbenefits](http://www.manulife.ca/groupbenefits)**

