

Generic and Brand Name Medicines

Unless it is a new medicine, most prescription and over the counter medicines are sold by brand name and generic name medicines.

The active drug ingredients are the same between the brand name and the generic name medicine according to laws in the United States. The generic may look or taste different than the brand name medicine, but the generic name medicine must work the same way and just as quickly as the brand name medicine.

The generic and brand name medicines also share the same:

- Dose strength and way it is to be given
- Use, or the reason you take the medicine
- Side effects
- Safety

Generics often **cost much less** than brand name medicines.

Examples of generic and brand name medicines

Brand Name	Generic Name
Tylenol, for pain or fever	Acetaminophen
Motrin or Advil, for pain, fever or inflammation	Ibuprofen
Coumadin, to prevent blood clots	Warfarin
Glucophage, to help control blood sugar levels	Metformin
Keflex, an antibiotic that treats some infections	Cephalexin

Generic name medicines are often packaged and labeled under the drug store or grocery store brand names, such as CVS or Walgreens.

Use medicines safely

- Ask your doctor if there is any reason that you **should not** use a generic version of any medicine you take.
- Be sure you know the generic name of any brand name medicine you take.
- For over the counter medicines, most stores will have the generic name medicine right beside the brand name medicine on the shelf. Compare the labels on the medicines to be sure the brand and generic name medicines have the same active ingredients.

Active ingredients are the medicines in a product that work to treat your problem. For example, acetaminophen is a medicine used to treat pain or fever. The active ingredient, acetaminophen, is listed on the medicine label for both the brand name medicine and the generic medicine labels shown below.

There may be other ingredients in a product, such as dyes or colorings. These are called **inactive ingredients**. They do not change the amount of the active ingredients in a product.

For example:

Brand name medicine label for the over the counter medicine acetaminophen:



Drug Facts	
Active ingredient (in each caplet)	Purpose
Acetaminophen 500 mg.....	Pain reliever/fever reducer
Uses	
■ temporarily relieves minor aches and pains due to:	
■ the common cold	■ headache
■ minor pain of arthritis	■ backache
■ muscular aches	■ toothache
■ premenstrual and menstrual cramps	
■ temporarily reduces fever	

Generic name medicine label for the over the counter medicine acetaminophen:



Drug Facts	
Active ingredient (in each caplet)	Purpose
Acetaminophen 500 mg.....	Pain reliever/fever reducer
Uses	
■ temporarily relieves minor aches and pains due to:	
■ the common cold	■ headache
■ minor pain of arthritis	■ backache
■ muscular aches	■ toothache
■ premenstrual and menstrual cramps	
■ temporarily reduces fever	

- When refilling prescription medicines: If the medicine looks different or you do not recognize the medicine name on the label, ask the pharmacist to check that it is the right medicine for you.
- **Take the medicine as directed by your doctor and by the medicine label. Do not take more medicine than what is on the medicine label.** Taking more medicine will not help your symptoms. Medicine amounts are created for your health and safety.
- **Follow the directions on the medicine label for how to take the medicine.** If the medicine says to take with food, then take eat something small when you take your medicine. If the medicine says to wait one hour before or after eating, then you should do so. There may be other directions for taking medicines. These directions help the medicine to work more effectively in your body.
- **Read the side effects of a medicine before taking it.** You may want to ask you doctor about when to stop taking medicine or when to seek medical treatment if the side effects are serious. Side effects are listed on a medicine label.
- **Ask the pharmacist for help** if you have any questions or you want to know if you have the right medicine.