

## **Adventist Healthcare: Health Tip of the Week**

### Generic/Brand Name Drugs

About half of the drugs on the market are available in generic form and they are sold for substantially less than their brand name counterparts. According to the Congressional Budget Office, generic drugs save consumers an estimated \$8-10 billion a year at retail pharmacies. A state law allows pharmacists to substitute less expensive generic drugs for many brand name products even if your healthcare provider has written the prescription for the brand name drug.

### Facts about Prescription Drugs

- \* When an origination company develops a new drug, it gives the drug two names. One is its generic name (the name of the chemical compound that makes up the drug) and the other is the brand name (the name of the product that is sold to the consumer).
- \* Newer drugs are protected by patents and supplied by only one company. But once a patent expires (20 years), the drug may be manufactured and sold by other companies under a different brand name or under the generic name.
- \* Drug companies must submit an abbreviated new drug application (ANDA) for approval to market a generic product. The ANDA process does not require the drug sponsor to repeat costly animal/clinical research on ingredients or dosage forms already approved for safety/effectiveness.
- \* A generic drug is identical or bioequivalent to a brand name drug in dosage form, safety, strength and route of administration. Also, in quality, performance characteristics and intended use.
- \* A generic drug must contain the same active ingredients as the brand name equivalent but its inactive ingredients may vary. The quantity/speed of absorption of its active ingredients into the blood stream must be the same or similar within designated ranges.
- \* A generic drug is not necessarily made in the exact manner as the brand name drug. Formulation difference can affect how much actually enters the bloodstream after oral administration causing occasional differences in individual side effects.
- \* Your doctor may specify that you be given only the brand name drug because it has a narrow therapeutic index, which means it can be easily toxic or not effective if it is absorbed even a little differently.

Sources: U.S. Food & Drug Administration (Center for Drug Evaluation & Research - Office of Generic Drugs) and Washington and Shady Grove Adventist Hospitals. The Health Tip of the Week is for educational purposes only. For additional information, consult your physician. Please feel free to copy and distribute this health resource.