

Changing from Branded to Generic Medicine – Patient information

Most medicines have two different names, a brand name and a generic name.

What is a branded medicine?

The brand name is the name given to the medicine by the company that makes the medicine. Example: Calpol and Nurofen are branded medicines. Manufacturers of brand name medicines are granted several years when no other manufacturer can make that medicine, this period is covered by a patent.

What is a generic medicine?

The generic name of a medicine is the name of the active ingredient in the medicine. Once a brand-name medicine's patent expires, other companies can produce and sell generic versions. Example: Paracetamol is the generic version of Calpol, and Ibuprofen is the generic version of Nurofen.

Are generic medicines as good as branded medicines?

Yes. Generic medicines are carefully tested and regulated. They are equally effective.

Why do we use generic medicines?

Generic medicines contain the same active ingredient and are used in the same way as the branded medicines. They are just as effective as branded medicines and typically cost less, helping the NHS make better use of public funds. This will allow the NHS to fund more treatment for more people, enabling sustainable care.

Why do generic medicines look different?

Generic medicines can appear different because they are produced by various manufacturers. This variation can include differences in packaging, shape, size, colour, and sometimes taste. However, these differences do not affect the way the medicine works, as it contains the same active ingredient as the branded version.

What if I have a problem with generic medicines?

If you notice any side effects or feel unwell after using the medicine, please speak to your doctor or pharmacist. If you have any known allergies or intolerances, always let your doctor or pharmacist know before starting a new medicine.

Key reminders

- Always take medicines as prescribed by your doctor or pharmacist.
- If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, ask your pharmacist or doctor.
- If you want to leave feedback, please contact the ICB Patient Experience Team by email at nnicb-nn.patientexperience@nhs.net.