

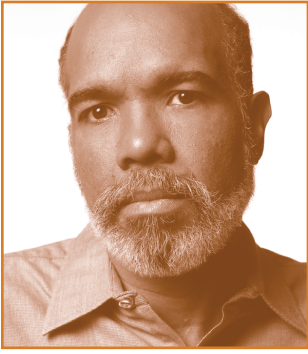


# Generic and Brand Name Drugs: Understanding the Basics



Depression and Bipolar  
Support Alliance

We've been there. We can help.



*Joe has just been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. After talking to his doctor, he decides to see a therapist and go on medication. Joe's doctor gives him two weeks' worth of samples for a brand name drug called SteadyMood and asks him to come back to see him in two weeks. When he returns, Joe's feeling a little better and agrees to keep taking SteadyMood for another month.*

*When he gets to the pharmacy, Joe learns that his insurance plan's co-pay for a month's supply of SteadyMood is \$40. This seems a little expensive to him, so he asks the pharmacist about it. His pharmacist tells him that he's fortunate to have insurance coverage; without it, the brand name would cost \$100. Joe asks if there's another drug he could take that costs less. The pharmacist tells him that his medication comes in a generic form. His insurance co-pay would be \$10 for a month's supply of the generic, but his doctor would have to approve it.*

*The pharmacist calls Joe's doctor and gets approval to fill his prescription with the generic. The next morning, Joe opens the bottle and sees 30 round, white pills. He's confused and believes there must be some kind of mistake since the SteadyMood samples his doctor gave him were pink ovals. Joe calls his pharmacist who tells him that the round, white pills are the generic form for SteadyMood and they should work just fine.*

*After taking the generic for a month, Joe's feeling much better. He returns to the drugstore with another prescription from his doctor, and this time, it allows for generic substitution. Joe fills his prescription and leaves. The next morning, he opens the bottle to find a completely different-looking medicine—now, the pills are yellow and square. Joe's frustrated and even more confused. Is this a different drug altogether? Is it another type of generic drug? Should he simply stay with the brand name version that his doctor originally gave him? Many of us have found ourselves in situations like Joe's and can understand his frustration.*

## Making Smart Choices about Medications

Many prescription medicines are available to treat depression and bipolar disorder. The pharmacist might ask if you want your prescription filled with the brand name medicine or the generic medicine. Each option has pros and cons to consider. This brochure will

give you the information you need to help you decide what's right for you in your treatment and recovery plan. You'll learn that the decision to choose a brand name or a generic is one that involves you and your health care team.

*“The decision to choose a brand name or a generic is one that involves you and your health care team.”*

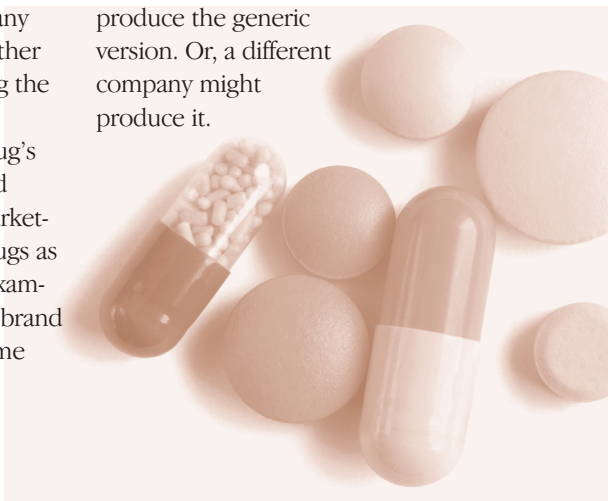
### What are brand name and generic drugs?



A brand name drug is a medicine that's discovered, developed and mar-

keted by a pharmaceutical company. Once a new drug is discovered, the company files for a patent to protect against other companies making copies and selling the drug. At this point the drug has two names: a generic name that's the drug's common scientific name and a brand name to make it stand out in the marketplace. This is true of prescription drugs as well as over-the-counter drugs. An example is the pain reliever Tylenol®. The brand name is Tylenol® and the generic name is acetaminophen.

Generic drugs have the same active ingredients as brand name drugs already approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Generics only become available after the patent expires on a brand name drug. Patent periods may last up to 20 years on some drugs. The same company that makes the brand name drug may also produce the generic version. Or, a different company might produce it.



# What's the difference between brand name and generic drugs?

It's important to remember that there are brand name and generic versions of medicines not only for mood disorders but for other conditions as well—high blood pressure, diabetes, etc. Today, about 50

percent of all prescriptions are filled with generic drugs. The FDA has established standards for generic drugs that might seem complicated but are really quite simple.

## The Similarities

According to the FDA, to substitute a generic for a brand name drug:

- It must contain the same active ingredients (the chemical substance that makes the drug work).
- It must have the same dosage strength (the amount of active ingredients, for example 20 mg or 40 mg).
- It must be the same dosage form (that is, it needs to be available in the same form as the original—for example, as a liquid, pill, etc.).
- It must have the same route of administration (the way the medication is introduced into the body).
- It must deliver similar amounts of the drug to the bloodstream (that is, it needs to deliver a comparable amount of the drug into the bloodstream within a similar time period as the brand name drug).



## The Differences

Here's how generics and brand name drugs differ:

- They look different. (Federal law requires this.)
  - They could have different sizes, shapes, colors or markings.
  - They have different names.
- They might have different inactive ingredients.
  - Drugs are made up of both active and inactive ingredients. Some people may be sensitive to inactive ingredients. For example, some people have reactions to certain dyes used in some drugs.
- The generic costs less than the brand name drug.
  - The cash price and insurance co-pay is usually lower. Generics can cost between 20 and 80 percent less, but keep in mind that cost is only one factor when considering the right medication for your condition.
- Generics vary by manufacturer, which means you could receive different versions based on where you purchase your medications and what type of generic they dispense.
  - Different pharmacies carry different generics.
  - Even the same pharmacy may change generic suppliers.

## Insurance Plans

For most consumers, their insurance plan determines what they pay for medication. Both private and government insurance companies promote using generic drugs when possible. They might even *require* substituting a generic for a brand name drug. As in Joe's story, the co-pay for the generic might be \$10. But the co-pay for the same dosage and amount of the brand name might be \$40. Some insurance plans might require you to pay the entire cost of the brand name drug if you don't accept the available generic.



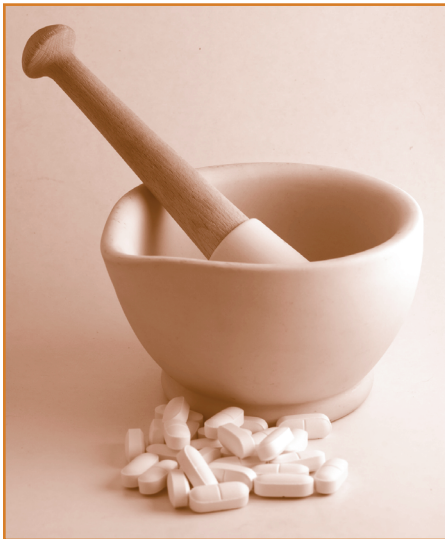
## Why do brand name drugs cost more than generics?

It takes several years, costly scientific development and many clinical studies to get a drug approved. Manufacturers of new brand name drugs (also called

“pioneer drugs”) usually take on the research and development costs for new medications. These research and development costs, along with marketing costs, account for most of the higher prices we pay for most brand name drugs.

In contrast, generic drugs have less research and development costs since the original manufacturer has already done many studies to make sure the drug is safe. These savings are passed on to the consumer.

However, while the brand name form is still protected by its patent, no generics can be produced. And, if a brand name drug has only just recently lost its patent, there may only be one generic form available. Usually, when there's only one generic option available, it will be more expensive.



## Since a drug’s generic and brand name versions look different, how can I be sure I’m getting the right medication at the pharmacy?

Be sure to check your medication labels and confirm the name and dose of your prescriptions. Generic forms of a brand name drug should all have the same name, no matter what company produced it. If your original prescription was written for the brand name, and the doctor allowed generic substitution, the bottle label should indicate this. Never assume

that the drug is identical if it looks different. Your pharmacist can verify this for you, and your doctor can also confirm this when you bring your medication bottle to your appointment. If you have a generic prescription, to reduce confusion, ask your pharmacist to refill your generic prescription with the same drug, from the same manufacturer, each time.

## Why doesn’t my doctor automatically prescribe generic drugs?

Not all medications have a generic form available. Some doctors might not be aware of recently approved generics. Doctors also differ in their beliefs towards, and experiences with, different medications. Our medical histories, insurance and personal preferences may also influence our doctor’s decision. It’s important that we consult our doctors



before deciding if a generic is right for us.

If you’re interested in trying a generic drug, first find out if it’s available. Ask your doctor.

Also, your pharmacist will have a list of generic drugs and can usually tell you how much they will cost on your insurance plan.

## What if I have a preference?

If you and your physician determine that either a generic or brand name drug is best for you, make sure your pharmacist knows. If your doctor writes your prescription specifically for the generic, that’s what the pharmacist will give you. As noted earlier, there might be several

different generic drug manufacturers. If you require the brand name drug, ask your doctor to indicate that on your prescription. Different states have different laws and regulations on generic substitutions.



# Making an informed choice



Is the brand name medicine or the generic version the best option? The answer is that it depends. There are several different things that

you and your doctor can consider:

- How difficult it is to control your medical condition
- How sensitive you are to changes in medication treatment
- How difficult it is to pay for your prescriptions, including whether your insurance covers prescriptions

## Drug Formularies

Each insurance plan has a formulary, a list of drugs that it approves and prefers for certain medical conditions. (Public insurances, like Medicaid and Medicare Part D, also have formularies.) A formulary lists which drugs the plan covers and at what level they're covered. Ideally, insurance companies base this list on the best medical information available at the time. They negotiate the prices of drugs on their formularies with drug manufacturers. And this often means dollar savings for the consumer.

When you enroll in an insurance plan, you should receive its formulary. A booklet and/or a website usually contain this information. If you're considering changing insurance plans, compare the cost of your medications on the formularies.



*It's important that we consult our doctors before deciding if a generic is right for us.*

# Prescription Checklist for Informed Consumers

Use the checklist below for either option to help you get the most out of your decision.

## If you and your doctor want the brand name drug:

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- Have your doctor indicate on the prescription that it is for the brand name drug only.
- Tell the pharmacist you want the brand name version if your prescription doesn't specify which.
- Check to make sure the medicine you get is the brand name drug.
- To help cover the cost:
  - Ask your doctor for samples of any new drugs that you are trying.
  - Ask your doctor about any coupons or voucher programs.
  - See if you qualify for financial assistance by checking out programs like these:

### **Partnership for Prescription Assistance (PPA)**

(888) 477-2669  
[www.pparx.com](http://www.pparx.com)

### **Together Rx Access**

(800) 444-4106  
[www.togetherrxaccess.com](http://www.togetherrxaccess.com)

## If you and your doctor want the generic drug:

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- Know the drug's brand name as well as its generic name.
- Know how to identify the generic from the label on your medicine bottle.
- Know what the generic looks like (color, size, shape, markings), especially if it looks different than it did the month before or if you use a daily or weekly pillbox.
- Check with your pharmacist to be sure that you're getting the right drug.
- Tell your doctor about any differences you might experience taking the generic.



## How do I find out more?

Navigating the world of prescription drugs doesn't have to be confusing. The best source of information about brand name and generic drugs is open discussion with your doctor and pharmacist. Individuals vary in their medical history, response to treatment and preferences. Only you and your doctor can determine the medication that best fits into your treatment and recovery plan. And getting to know your pharmacist can reduce frustration and increase your understanding about your care.

If you wish to learn more, you can find additional information on several websites such as the following:

**[www.DBSEAlliance.org/RxAssist](http://www.DBSEAlliance.org/RxAssist)**

A list of drug assistance programs, provided by the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

**[www.nlm.nih.gov/publicat/medicate.cfm#ptdep15](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/publicat/medicate.cfm#ptdep15)**

A list of psychiatric medications by brand name, provided by the National Institute of Mental Health

**[www.nlm.nih.gov/publicat/medicate.cfm#ptdep14](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/publicat/medicate.cfm#ptdep14)**

A list of psychiatric medications by generic name, provided by the National Institute of Mental Health

**[www.fda.gov/cder/ogdconsumerinfo/generics/q&a.html](http://www.fda.gov/cder/ogdconsumerinfo/generics/q&a.html)**

FAQs on generic and brand name drugs, provided by the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research

**[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginformation.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginformation.html)**

Consumer-friendly medication information provided by the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health

**[www.nlm.nih.gov/publicat/medicate.cfm](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/publicat/medicate.cfm)**

The National Institute of Mental Health's medication resource



## My Health Information

You can use this form to record helpful information about your doctors, medicines and insurance program.

### My family doctor

NAME	PHONE NUMBER	
CITY	STATE	ZIP

### My therapist

NAME	PHONE NUMBER	
CITY	STATE	ZIP

### My psychiatrist

NAME	PHONE NUMBER	
CITY	STATE	ZIP

### My pharmacist/pharmacy

NAME	PHONE NUMBER	
CITY	STATE	ZIP

### My insurance information

COMPANY/PROGRAM NAME	PHONE NUMBER
MY ID AND POLICY NUMBER	

### My daily medications, vitamins, supplements

NAME	DOSAGE	NAME	DOSAGE
NAME	DOSAGE	NAME	DOSAGE

### Notes

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# Please help us continue our education efforts.

We hope you found the information in this brochure useful. To help us continue our education efforts, please fill in and mail or fax the donation form below, call (800) 826-3632 or visit [www.DBSAlliance.org](http://www.DBSAlliance.org) for details.

**Yes, I want to make a difference. Enclosed is my gift of:**

\$100    \$50    \$20    Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE COUNTRY ZIP

DAYTIME PHONE E-MAIL

- Check (payable to DBSA)    Money order (payable to DBSA)  
 VISA    MasterCard    Discover    AmEx

ACCOUNT NUMBER EXPIRATION DATE

SIGNATURE (REQUIRED)

- I wish my gift to remain anonymous.  
 Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ donation envelopes to share.  
 Please send me information on including DBSA in my will.  
 I have enclosed my company's matching gift form.

**If you would like to make your gift a Memorial or Honorary Tribute, please complete the following:**

- In memory of/in honor of (circle one) \_\_\_\_\_ PRINT NAME  
 Please notify the following recipient of my gift:

RECIPIENT'S NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE COUNTRY ZIP

**Please send this form with payment to:** DBSA, 730 N. Franklin Street, Suite 501, Chicago, IL 60610-7224 USA **Questions?** Call (800) 826-3632 or (312) 642-0049.

**Fax credit card payments** (VISA, MasterCard, Discover or AmEx) to (312) 642-7243.

**Make secure online donations** at [www.DBSAlliance.org](http://www.DBSAlliance.org).

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## Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

**We've been there. We can help.**

The **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)** is the leading patient-directed national organization focusing on the most prevalent mental illnesses. The organization fosters an environment of understanding about the impact and management of these life-threatening illnesses by providing up-to-date, scientifically-based tools and information written in language the general public can understand. DBSA supports research to promote more timely diagnosis, develop more effective and tolerable treatments and discover a cure. The organization works to ensure that people living with mood disorders are treated equitably.

Assisted by a Scientific Advisory Board comprising the leading researchers and clinicians in the field of mood disorders, DBSA has more than 1,000 peer-run support groups across the country. Nearly five million people request and receive information and assistance each year. DBSA's mission is to improve the lives of people living with mood disorders.

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Website: [www.DBSAAlliance.org](http://www.DBSAAlliance.org)

*Visit our updated, interactive website for important information, breaking news, chapter connections, advocacy help and much more.*

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DBSA does not endorse or recommend the use of any specific treatment, medication or resource mentioned in this brochure. For advice about specific treatments or medications, individuals should consult their physicians and/or mental health professionals. This brochure is not intended to take the place of a visit to a qualified health care provider.