

**Psst!**

Plan to Stay in Shape Today

**GENERIC DRUGS**

JUST AS EFFECTIVE,  
MUCH LESS  
EXPENSIVE



# WHAT ARE GENERIC DRUGS, EXACTLY?

Generic drugs are equivalent to original drugs. A drug's generic name corresponds to the name of the active ingredient (chemical substance) responsible for the drug's effect. For example, Tylenol® is the brand name of the original drug, but the substance responsible for the therapeutic effect is acetaminophen. As such, acetaminophen is the generic name of Tylenol®. Today, over ten companies market equivalent but less expensive generic versions of Tylenol®. That's the essence of the generic drug industry: providing products that are just as effective and safe as original medications, but at a lower cost.

## GENERIC DRUGS

**Same efficacy and safety  
profile as the original—  
but less expensive!**

## BACKGROUND

Healthcare costs are growing constantly as the population ages and life expectancy steadily increases. A large portion of the healthcare budget is eaten up by drug costs. How can we remedy this situation? Using generic drugs is one solution that helps cut the costs associated with drug treatments. Generic drugs are less expensive products that boast the same efficacy as their original branded counterparts. **For over 50 years,** the generic drug industry has worked hard to develop products to help cut the costs of drug treatment. It is currently estimated that one in three drug prescriptions written are for generic brands. In hospitals, the vast majority of medications used are also generic.

## DO ALL ORIGINAL PRODUCTS HAVE A GENERIC EQUIVALENT?

No. When a company discovers a new drug, it holds exclusive marketing rights to the medication for a number of years, allowing it to sell its product with no competition from generic companies. Generic drugs can only be released on the market after this period. As a result some drugs do not yet have any generic equivalent because the company producing the original still has a monopoly on the product.

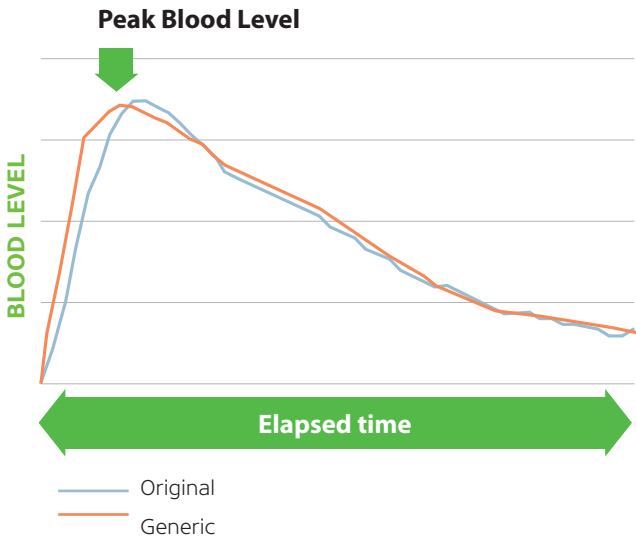
## RIGOROUS CONTROL

Not just any company can market a generic product. Generic drug producers must meet very exacting standards. Health Canada checks the quality of the new product to make sure the active ingredients provide the same therapeutic effects as the original drug.



## AS SAFE AS ORIGINAL DRUGS

Health Canada requires and ensures that generic drugs contain the same quantity and quality of active ingredients as the original product. A number of studies are conducted to guarantee that the generic drug is comparable to the original in the way it is absorbed and distributed in the body.



In cases when tests on a drug's absorption and distribution are impossible (e.g., for cream or ointment based treatments) strict scientific studies are conducted to ensure that the beneficial and undesirable effects of the generic drug are comparable to those of the original on all levels. Generic products released in the country and monitored by Health Canada boast the same therapeutic benefits as their original counterparts.

SAME  
CONTENTS,  
DIFFERENT  
CONTAINER!



## WHY DO CERTAIN GENERIC DRUGS LOOK DIFFERENT THAN THE ORIGINAL?

A drug is comprised of more than just active medical substances. Other non-medicinal products are also used (e.g., lactose). Such substances are included to add color, bind ingredients together, or create a coating to make the product easier to swallow. Although all ingredients that go into a drug must be approved by Health Canada, only the active medical substances are tested for equivalency between generic and original drugs. A company may file a number of patents to protect its original drug. Patents can cover a range of factors, from the color to the shape of the drug. As such, generic drug makers may opt for non-medicinal ingredients different than those used in original drugs either by choice or, in some cases, to avoid legal problems.

None of these ingredients impact the drug's therapeutic effect, and generic drug makers are much more concerned with the drug's quality and efficacy than its physical resemblance to the original. The contents are what's important, not the container.

## SOME GENERIC DRUGS ACTUALLY INNOVATE

Generic drug companies do more than just reproduce active medicinal substances. In certain cases, they even add value to existing products. For instance, some original drugs are available in only one flavor or one concentration. Some generic drug companies develop products that use the same active ingredient, but offer a wider selection of flavors and concentrations for greater flexibility in administering treatments.

The best way to find out whether a generic drug is a good choice for your condition will always be the same: speak to your healthcare professional—he is always the best person to advise you!

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**JUST AS EFFECTIVE AND SAFE, AND  
SOMETIMES EVEN INNOVATIVE—BUT MOST  
IMPORTANTLY LESS EXPENSIVE!**

The number one benefit of generic drugs is clearly the substantial savings they offer the public and to our healthcare system in general. They can save you up to 30% or more over the cost of original drugs. Rest assured: all generic products on the market in Canada are just as effective and safe as original products. They're just cheaper!

Generic drug manufacturers spend more on research and development than original drug manufacturers in Canada.

In Quebec, 400 to 500 brand name products have disappeared from the market. Their replacement by equivalent generic drugs has allowed hundreds of patients to continue with their original treatments.

Generic drugs:  
**Good for your health—  
and your wallet!**





Date

Prescribed drugs, natural products, vitamins, and over-the-counter drugs	Concentration	Indication (why you take it)	Generic equivalents

## REFERENCES

### **Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association – Generic Drug Development**

<http://www.canadiangenerics.ca/en/resources/docs/GenericDrugDevelopment.pdf>  
 URL shortcut: <http://bit.ly/IFVELC>

### **Health Canada – Safety and Effectiveness of Generic Drugs**

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/med/med-gen-eng.php>  
 URL shortcut: <http://bit.ly/jQlqwC>

### **Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association – Generic Drugs: Same Quality, Lower Prices**

[http://www.canadiangenerics.ca/en/resources/docs/Brochure\\_same\\_quality\\_lower\\_price\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.canadiangenerics.ca/en/resources/docs/Brochure_same_quality_lower_price_Eng.pdf)  
 URL shortcut: <http://bit.ly/j39W4C>

### **Health Canada – Guidance for Industry Bioequivalence Requirements: Critical Dose Drugs**

[http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/alt\\_formats/pdf/prodpharma/applic-demande/guide-ld/bio/critical\\_dose\\_critique-eng.pdf](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/alt_formats/pdf/prodpharma/applic-demande/guide-ld/bio/critical_dose_critique-eng.pdf)  
 URL shortcut: <http://bit.ly/k6u94z>