

Generic Medications: A Smart Choice for Your Health

USING YOUR BENEFITS

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The Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP) provides benefit plans that cover high-quality products and therapeutic services, including medications, that are safe and effective. We are also dedicated to ensuring members have the information they need to make informed health decisions. In this article, we explore the benefits of generic medications and debunk some common myths, highlight how they can support your health and well-being, and demonstrate how they contribute to the sustainability of your benefit plans.

WHAT ARE GENERIC MEDICATIONS?

Generic medications contain the same active ingredients, strength, dosage form, and route of administration as their brand-name counterparts. Prior to approval, they undergo significant Health Canada testing to ensure they meet the same high standards of quality, safety, and effectiveness as brand-name drugs. This ensures that generics are equivalent in performance and offer the same therapeutic benefits as the brand-name version, providing you with reliable and effective treatment options that are more cost-effective.



**Bioequivalence:**

Generic drugs perform the same way in the body and provide identical therapeutic benefits, ensuring the same level of effectiveness to the brand-name drug.

**Rigorous Testing and Standards:**

Health Canada requires generics to meet the same stringent quality and safety standards as brand-name drugs.

**Endorsement:**

Leading healthcare professionals and regulatory bodies endorse generics, recognizing their role in maintaining high standards of patient care.

Myth: *Generics are less effective than brand-name drugs.*

Fact: *Generics contain the same active ingredients and are designed to perform the same way in the body as brand-name drugs, ensuring you receive the same therapeutic effect.*

Myth: *Generics are not as safe as brand-name drugs.*

Fact: *Health Canada holds generics to the same standards as brand-name drugs, ensuring they are as reliable and safe as the brand-name drugs.*

SAVING YOU MONEY: NOW AND IN THE LONG RUN

While generics are equal to brand name drugs on a therapeutic level, they are not equal when it comes to cost. Generics are about 25-90% cheaper than their brand-name counterparts.

Case in point: *On June 7, 2024, Lisdexamfetamine, a generic version of Vyvanse (a medication used for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)), became available in Canada. As a high-use medication, the more economical (and just as effective) Lisdexamfetamine would reduce covered members out-of-pocket expenses, which, depending on their plan, could amount to a lot of money.*

Any highly claimed drug can add strain to a plan's sustainability. Having provisions in place, such as coverage for generic drugs, reduces that strain. This, in turn, helps ASEBP create sustainable benefit plans that supports members' health and wellness long-term.

ADDRESSING YOUR CONCERNS

Switching to a generic medication is an important decision, and we want to ensure you have all the information you need:

- ◆ **Consult Your Pharmacist:** Your community pharmacist knows your health and medication history and can answer any questions or concerns you have about switching to a generic. They can provide personalized advice and ensure you are taking the correct medication for your needs. You can also ask ASEBP's pharmacist your medication questions.
- ◆ **Brand-Name Preferences:** If you prefer a brand-name drug, ASEBP will reimburse up to the cost of the generic counterpart. You will need to cover any out-of-pocket expense.
- ◆ **What if I have an allergy to a generic drug's non-medicinal ingredients?** If you have an allergy to a generic drug, talk to your health care provider about other medication options.
- ◆ **My other plan mentions biosimilar drugs. Are they the same as generic drugs?** Biosimilar drugs are not generic drugs. However, they are cost-effective, "highly similar" copies of brand-name drugs. The Alberta government and other benefit providers have strategies in place that requires their members to replace their brand name drugs with biosimilars. Your ASEBP benefits may cover the cost of the biosimilar drug; however, you should double check coverage using our Drug Inquiry tool available in your My ASEBP account.

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

If you missed it, watch the recording of an interview (link to recording) with ASEBP's pharmacist, Ollie Semonis, that explores the benefits of generic medications. Do you have other health or medication questions? Ask your questions and find other Ask Our Pharmacist topics on It Takes a Village. We also invite you to contact one of our benefit specialists, who are always willing to help you out.

[WATCH THE RECORDING](#)